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*Damnatio Memoriae* and Exemplarity in Imperial Rome: From the  
Julio-Claudians to the Severans

Volume 1 of 2.

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<sup>1</sup> See below, p.24.

<sup>2</sup> See my upgrade review(s) (2016-7).

<sup>3</sup> Cat, dog, cat, dog, respectively.

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## Declaration

This thesis contains no material which I have used before or which I have previously published.

This thesis is entirely my own work, except where specified otherwise.

This thesis has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

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<sup>4</sup> See below, p.116. (Not really - He has been consistently understanding and patient, whenever I have had difficulties).

## Abstract

Forms of material cultural repression are at the forefront of modern-day cultural debates and discourse. Over the course of the past twenty years, our theoretical understanding of forms of collective memory has been thoroughly expanded. Simultaneously, the study of *damnatio memoriae*, the destructive acts against the portraits and inscriptions of a condemned individual in the Roman period, has benefited from the publication of the foundational works of Varner and Flower. However, these studies have thus far focussed on the immediate aftermath of the destructive acts, and the reception of the already-destroyed material. In addition, the question of how *damnatio* affects the Roman collective memory of the condemned remains unanswered. This thesis aims to answer this question, by examining closely two understudied aspects of the phenomenon – the immediate ‘spectacle’ of destruction, and its long-term consequences on a condemned individual’s surviving ‘material legacy’.

Focussing on the case study of the city of Rome before the ‘crisis of the third century’, the interactions with the material legacies of condemned emperors will be examined. Each method of interaction will be analysed separately, considering all types of material from a handful of emperors in each case, to establish the way it influenced how Roman culture remembered ‘tyrants’. The immediate ‘spectacle’ of *damnatio* will be discussed first, revealing how the destruction acted both to remove the positive identity of the condemned, as well as to begin the creation of a new negative identity to replace it. The long-term consequences will then be examined. Analysis of the acts of successor emperors to deliberately contrast themselves with condemned predecessors reveals how this contrast further engrained the negative identity into the cultural memory of the city. The appropriation of their buildings, furthermore, demonstrates how successors reigning long after the death of a condemned emperor continue to rejuvenate this process, contributing further to the recreation of the condemned’s identity. I will argue that close scrutiny of all the consequences of *damnatio memoriae* reveals a process that transforms the positive identity of a condemned emperor into a negative *exemplum* of tyranny, embodying the negative qualities that the destruction and denigration of his material legacy condemn him for.

## Introduction

The control of the physical representations of history and the memory of a culture is still very much relevant to modern society, despite our technological advances. This can be clearly seen in the reaction to the continued existence and display of statues of confederate leaders and generals in the United States. This debate has resulted not only in the removal or erasure of the symbols targeted, but also in instances of spontaneous violence by individuals and crowds.<sup>5</sup> This form of attack on symbols of the past in an attempt to condemn someone or something is termed by Jan Assmann as ‘cultural repression’, and is a phenomenon which reappears throughout human history. As he states, in any society with a sufficiently sophisticated ‘memory culture’, attempts to suppress part of that society’s memory can be found.<sup>6</sup> These attempts struggle against the impossibility of truly erasing a memory from a society – no matter how thoroughly the physical records are destroyed, the memories in the minds of individuals cannot be, and they will persist through communication. Nevertheless, the creation of movements to repress memories are unhindered. Clearly, the recognition of the importance of what we choose to monumentalise and publicly remember as a culture is inherent to human nature. While the figures that represent this memory may have changed, from kings to politicians to more abstract symbols, the attempts to control the memories they carry exist within a similar framework. It is valuable, therefore, to examine the ways in which our ancestors carried out cultural repression, in order to better understand the motivations and consequences of our contemporary attempts. This thesis discusses this within the phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae*, the Roman-era practice of physically attacking the memory of individuals after their condemnation by their contemporaries. I will be focussing on Imperial Rome up to the reign of Severus Alexander. I will be taking a broader view of *damnatio*, looking at both the immediate and long-term consequences for the memory of the individual who is targeted, to present a new perspective on how *damnatio* interacts with memory and the Roman system of exemplarity. I will argue that *damnatio* constituted a reversal of this system, creating a negative *exemplum* from the memory of the condemned.

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<sup>5</sup> For organised removal, see the removal of the statue of Robert E. Lee from a Dallas city park: BBC News – ‘Dallas removes Robert E Lee statue from city park (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-41284464>). For destruction by individuals, see the smashing of windows by a worker at Calhoun College, Yale: New York Times – ‘Yale Drops Case Against Worker who Smashed Window Depicting Slaves’ ([https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/nyregion/yale-worker-john-c-calhoun-window-slaves.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/13/nyregion/yale-worker-john-c-calhoun-window-slaves.html?_r=0)). For destruction by crowds, see the toppling of the Confederate Soldiers Monument in Durham, North Carolina: CNN – ‘Seven Arrested in toppling of Confederate statue in North Carolina’ (<https://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/14/us/confederate-statue-pulled-down-north-carolina-trnd/index.html>).

<sup>6</sup> This can even be manifested in societies without writing; see the idea of ‘structural amnesia’ in oral societies as proposed by Jan Assmann – Assmann, J. (1995) p.366.

In this introductory chapter, I will be examining the Roman conceptualisation of '*memoria*' and '*damnatio memoriae*' through the lens and terminology of the rich field of memory studies, hoping to bring to light nuances and aims of this phenomenon that have not yet been considered. The concepts of 'cultural memory', 'social memory' and 'collective memory' are commonly used in secondary literature that deals with this topic, but so often idiomatically, and without respect for the theories that are built into them. As I will demonstrate, much of Roman *memoria* can be mapped onto overarching theories of cultural memory as proposed by experts in the fields of memory studies. The concept of 'memory figures' will be explored as a direct parallel for exemplarity, placing the well-regarded theories of Roller into a wider context.<sup>7</sup> The existing volume of work on *damnatio memoriae* will then be treated with this in mind to help unify existing theories, to establish what is missing within the existing body of work, and to demonstrate how these theories fit within the wider body of scholarship on *memoria* and memory studies. Understanding these lacunae, and how exactly *damnatio memoriae* relates to exemplarity, will demonstrate the purpose of this thesis. Finally, the thesis' structure and methodology will be set out in detail, including the reasoning for the case studies and terminology chosen.

### Cultural memory and *memoria*

Recently, there has been an increase in interest in the mechanics of memory in a more general sense. Galinsky suggests that the Nazi regime, and the holocaust which it perpetrated, has led academia to the revelation that 'academic history is inadequate to deal with such cataclysms which millions of people experienced'.<sup>8</sup> The drive to preserve the memories of that generation's experiences as it begins to die out, he says, has led to alternatives to academic history, and a revival in oral histories.<sup>9</sup> The relatability of these experiences has inspired an interest in how societies and individuals remember significant events.<sup>10</sup> Galinsky describes the consequent rise of the field of memory studies, both within and without classical scholarship as a 'boom', a sentiment echoed by other authors.<sup>11</sup>

The result of this 'memory boom' is a much more thorough model for the creation of collective memory, and how it transforms over time and between generations. Exploring Roman *memoria* through the lens of this model is enormously helpful in interpreting the

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<sup>7</sup> See Roller (2004) and (2018), discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> Galinsky (2016) p.1-2. See also Kattago (2015) p.8-9.

<sup>9</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.vii; Galinsky (2016) p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Galinsky (2016) p.2.

<sup>11</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.xi; Shaya (2013) p.106; Kattago (2015) p.2; Kousser (2015) p.33; Kristensen (2015) p.668; Galinsky (2016) p.9.

purposes of its component parts, and comprehending the interactions between them. Collective memory, the concept that memory could be shared between individuals in a society, was first introduced to the academic world as a subject of study by Maurice Halbwachs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup> While his observations are still important, and form the foundational basis for work taking place in the recent 'memory boom', it is certainly true that the field has moved on significantly as a result of this surge. The most significant of these works, I would argue, is that of Jan and Aleida Assmann (henceforth referred to as J. Assmann and A. Assmann, respectively) whose terminology, and model(s) of 'cultural memory' are fundamental in this regard.

The first critical concept is that of communicative and cultural memory, which was first developed by J. Assmann (in conjunction with A. Assmann), who built upon the ideas presented by Halbwachs earlier in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup> Both are forms of societal collective memory, which J. Assmann argues are potentially distinct in how they are transmitted, the forms they take, and their content.<sup>14</sup> The key distinction, however, is one of time. Communicative memory consists of that which has been shared between contemporaries – memories of the recent past.<sup>15</sup> The transfer between communicative memory and cultural memory is how a society's repertoire of memories is filtered, so that only those memories that are important to that society's values remain. J. Assmann offers thresholds of forty, half the generational limit, and one hundred years, the absolute generational limit, as being particularly significant in this regard. After forty years, those who witnessed the event as an adult will have ended their 'professional' lives, he says, and will value their role as carriers of that memory, and wish for it to be passed on.<sup>16</sup>

The disparity which separates communicative and cultural memory can also be seen in how the population at large interacts with it. Whereas communicative memory can vary from individuals almost randomly, participation in cultural memory is structured according to education or status. Participation in cultural memory can thus be controlled, and where communicative memory is fluid and informal, cultural memory is rigid and often ceremonial.<sup>17</sup> The aforementioned institutionalisation of the memory of the holocaust is an example of this transfer. These two forms of collective memory are not completely separate, and there is

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<sup>12</sup> See Halbwachs (1992) – Halbwachs' ideas on collective memory were first published in 1925. For commentary, see Galinsky (2016) p.7-8

<sup>13</sup> See Galinsky (2015) p.2-3 for a short summary.

<sup>14</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.36-41.

<sup>15</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.36-7.

<sup>16</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.36. Though this is most closely applicable to modern society, I would argue that it is also appropriate as an absolute, upper limit for ancient societies.

<sup>17</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.38-9. See Alcock (2001) p.324-326 for more on this concept.



often significant overlap, both in time and within the memories themselves (as some memories could be semi-communicative and semi-cultural). The separation between the two modes also varies by culture – Assmann presents Ancient Egypt as an example of where they are entirely separated, to the extent that there is a ‘bi-culture’, while in modern society there is certainly more blending between the two modes of collective memory.<sup>18</sup>

A. Assmann develops these ideas in her later work, solving some of the most obvious problems, such as that of the role of an individual’s biological memory in this scheme. She broadly agrees with the distinction between communicative and cultural memory, redefining communicative memory as ‘social memory’, but argues that the communicative is an extension of individual memory.<sup>19</sup> I would agree that social memory is a more carefully chosen term, when taking individual memory into account, as memory is inherently communicative, as Halbwachs pointed out.<sup>20</sup> However, A. Assmann re-evaluates the ‘dimensions of memory’, defining three – the biological, the social, and the cultural.<sup>21</sup> Each of these dimensions is carried by different groups, exists within different environments, and is supported by external media and one another, as she summarises in the following table.<sup>22</sup>

<b>Dimension:</b>	<b>Neural memory</b>	<b>Social memory</b>	<b>Cultural memory</b>
<b>Carrier:</b>	Individual brain	Social communication	Symbolic media
<b>Environment:</b>	Social communication	Individual brain	Social communication
<b>Support:</b>	Symbolic media	Symbolic media	Individual memory

Her thoughts on cultural memory in this regard are worth repeating, cultural memory being very important for *memoria* and, subsequently, *damnatio memoriae*. She mentions, as J. Assmann does, that cultural memory is carried by symbols and institutions that can be passed down through the generations.<sup>23</sup> The environment in which it exists is put forward as ‘the group that creates its identity by means of these symbols, in that the group is always engaged in changing, renewing and revitalising the cultural pool’.<sup>24</sup> The element which supports cultural

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<sup>18</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.40-41.

<sup>19</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.13-14.

<sup>20</sup> Halbwachs (1992) p.41-53; Assmann, A. (2016) p.13.

<sup>21</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.18-20.

<sup>22</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.19. A. Assmann outlines the differences between the ‘individual brain’, the ‘social communication’ and ‘symbolic media’ here. To briefly explain the difference between social communication and symbolic media, however, the former represents the framework of interpersonal relations and conversation which are constructed by means of shared memories, and the latter represents the images, narratives and other media which are recognised by the society at large as representing certain experiences or concepts – see p.20-21. These elements work with one another to construct collective memories of both kinds.

<sup>23</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.20.

<sup>24</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.20.

memory is thus the individuals that engage with these symbols. The work of A. Assmann in this area seems to offer additional layers of sophistication here, perhaps due to its much more recent publication, and so I will be utilising A. Assmann's term 'social' memory over J. Assmann's 'communicative'.

I would argue that we are able to recognise these concepts, of social memory and cultural memory, in Roman discourse on the subject of memory and memorialisation. Roman *memoria*, on an individual level, was driven by a desire to resist the oblivion for which everyone was destined, by default, and a desire for commemoration is portrayed as bearing a degree of emotive urgency.<sup>25</sup> Being remembered is a way to escape this oblivion, and the concept of an afterlife through memory is a key part of Roman cultural identity.<sup>26</sup> As A. Assmann points out, this concept of remembering something being improbable and culture fighting against it, as if to fight the inevitable, is something almost universal to human societies.<sup>27</sup> However, it seems that the Romans were unique in their acknowledgement of the overwhelming likelihood of oblivion, and the awareness that their memorialisation systems were fighting an 'uphill battle' against forgetting. Tacitus, in the closing statement of the biography of his father Agricola, summarises this Roman view succinctly (Index 1).<sup>28</sup> Having detailed and praised the achievements of a praiseworthy man, whom he has portrayed almost as the very embodiment of manly *virtus*, despite the pressures to conform to the will of a despot, he concludes with an assessment of his treatment in posterity – as much a hope as anything else.<sup>29</sup>

*'...nam multos veterum velut inglorios et ignobilis oblivio obruit: Agricola posteritati narratus et traditus superstes erit.'*<sup>30</sup>

'...for many of the men of old will be buried in oblivion, inglorious and unknown. Agricola's story has been told and passed down to posterity, and he will survive.'

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<sup>25</sup> Hope (2011) p.xiv; Flower (2006) p.2-4.

<sup>26</sup> Varner (2004) p.2; Gowing (2005) p.2 – 'Romans attached a heightened importance to memory, which manifests itself in almost every aspect of their existence, from celebrations of the dead to oratory to law, suffusing and animating their art, their buildings, and their literature.'

<sup>27</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.36.

<sup>28</sup> All passages discussed extensively are included in full in the Index of Sources in the appendix to this thesis.

<sup>29</sup> Birley (2016) p.xxv-xxvi, notes on Tac., *Agric.* 46. on p.34.

<sup>30</sup> Tac., *Agric.* 46 – see Index 1

Tacitus clearly demonstrates the importance of 'resisting oblivion' to motivating Roman memorialisation.<sup>31</sup> It seems to me that this desire for oneself or others to escape the oblivion for which we are all destined, is effectively the expression of a wish to become part of the Roman cultural memory. The effective recognition of the inevitability of becoming forgotten to society, and the necessity to counteract this by becoming a part of the culture of that society, demonstrates the relevance of the ideas of social and cultural memory to understanding Roman *memoria*.

Furthermore, the mechanics of social and cultural memory can be seen to reflect certain aspects of Roman culture. The generational limit of 40-100 years, for instance, has parallels in the *saeculum*, a span of time recognised by the Romans as being the longest any individual could live. This concept is perhaps best known as the mechanism by which the dates of the *ludi saeculares* (secular games) were decided, as they were celebrated to mark the end of one *saeculum* and the beginning of the next.<sup>32</sup> Despite some inconsistency with the practical implementation of this concept, as the intervals between one *ludi saeculares* and the next varied wildly, the concept of the *saeculum* recognised the importance of an absolute limit on the ability for individuals to carry memory, and the ritualization of this limit. This demonstrates an awareness of the difference between what is remembered and discussed by individuals and what is remembered by Roman culture more widely.

The institutionalisation of memories, such as the institutions preserving the memory of the holocaust, which ensure survival into the cultural memory can also be seen in Roman culture. One could see the *ludi saeculares* as the archetypal example of this in Roman culture – a ritual which celebrates this process as a whole; the 'ritualization of the ritualization' of memory. Rome, I would argue, is somewhere in between the Egyptian 'bi-culture' as described by J. Assmann, and a complete blending of the two modes of collective memory. Rome's cultural memory, after all, was carried through texts and rituals, access to which was necessarily restricted by status or literacy. However, it was also carried through monuments, visual media and oral or folk history, elements which are less 'rigid and ceremonial' by comparison, and to which all citizens have access. While attempting to categorise ancient Rome in this way would require more time than this thesis can afford to allot to it, it is important to consider that access to Roman cultural memory was neither completely

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<sup>31</sup> Flower (2006) p.2-3; Sailor (2008) p.107. His self-promotion of his participation in this system also demonstrates how prestigious contributing towards *memoria* was. Sailor also suggests, intriguingly, that Tacitus is offering a resistance to Domitian's tyranny by memorialising those that were killed under him – Sailor (2008) p.108-11.

<sup>32</sup> Censorinus, writing in the early third century, gives the definition of a *saeculum* as the maximum extent of a human lifetime and discusses the history of the *ludi* – Censorinus *DN.17*, especially 17.2. See also Rantala (2017) p.1-5.

institutionalised and strictly controlled, nor completely fluid and 'democratized'.<sup>33</sup> A. Assman's focus on symbolic media is also highly significant in the Roman context, as Roman cultural memory certainly placed a great deal of significance on the material incarnations of this, as discussed in full later.

Understanding the concepts of social and cultural memory, and how they functioned in Roman society, is important to understanding how *memoria* functioned. In addition, seeing how Roman writers recognised these concepts demonstrates their own understanding of these concepts, and thus how the cultural memory could be controlled or manipulated. Memorialisation, then, and its opposite *damnatio memoriae*, can thus be read as an attempt to manipulate the cultural memory in some way.

### Memory figures and Exemplarity

It ought to be addressed that collective memory as a concept is not uncontroversial. The term 'collective memory' itself is a largely metaphorical one - as Kattago succinctly reminds us, it is individuals who remember, not groups.<sup>34</sup> In the past, this has led to historians questioning the validity of the field in its entirety, pointing out (rightly) that personal experiences can never be fully shared with a collective,<sup>35</sup> or that the recognition of collective memory is antithetical to free will.<sup>36</sup> These perspectives of the field are a response to literature that forgets that collective memory is being used metaphorically, leading to comparisons being drawn between aspects of representation and reception within a culture and clinical psychology, often uncritically. The expansion of collective memory into the concept of 'collective trauma' thus was once described by Kansteiner and Weilnböck as a 'spectacular failure', that deconstructively used clinical psychology to build a political appreciation of the 'authenticity' of mass trauma in collective memory.<sup>37</sup> Dessinguè later commented on the source problem with the metaphor, in that it encourages scholarship to conceptualise collective memory as a unitary or homogeneous phenomenon.<sup>38</sup> In effect, the metaphorical collective memory is treated as if it acts just like the memory of an individual. Kansteiner blamed this conflation on a desire of historians to highlight human agency – to show that collective memory is created by individuals.<sup>39</sup> Both Kansteiner and Dessinguè point out that this has extended to the

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<sup>33</sup> Hostein (2004) p.219 states that Roman memorialisation was exceptionally institutionalised, but I would argue that would only apply to the memory of individuals through exemplarity, discussed later.

<sup>34</sup> Kattago (2015) p.4; Dessinguè (2015) p.90; Kansteiner (2002) p.185.

<sup>35</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck's views summarised in Kattago (2015) p.4.

<sup>36</sup> See Paul Ricoeur's criticism of Halbwachs summarised in Dessinguè (2015) p.97.

<sup>37</sup> Kansteiner & Weilnböck (2008) p.229 and throughout; Kansteiner (2002) p.182-8, 187.

<sup>38</sup> Dessinguè (2015) p.93.

<sup>39</sup> Kansteiner (2002) p.182.

reception of the collective memory, in that, in the past, how these memories would be received by individuals was often also neglected.<sup>40</sup>

To some degree, these problems are mitigated by the nuanced understanding offered by the separation of social and cultural memory.<sup>41</sup> The transition to the idea of cultural memory that the individuals within a society cause instability for collective memory is expressed well in the transfer from the former to the latter. This recognition of the contribution of separate individuals helps to counteract the perception of collective memory as homogeneous. Kansteiner praised J. Assmann for highlighting the importance of the present in this way; that cultural memories occurred in the 'mode of potentiality'.<sup>42</sup> It is this transition, the 'crystallisation' of social memory into a form which can survive into the cultural memory, which deserves special attention. By uniting the observations of memory scholars with a deep understanding of the perspective of one culture in a specific place and time period, I hope to avoid the aforementioned pitfalls and utilise these observations to inform how we should interpret a particularly Roman phenomenon.

The method by which memories enter the cultural 'canon' should be explored in detail. As A. Assmann points out, the transition from neural to social memory and vice versa is quite fluid, as an individual's memory is inherently connected to that of the social group to which he or she belongs.<sup>43</sup> However, the transition from social to cultural memory, by comparison, she describes as a 'breach' and an 'abyss'.<sup>44</sup> For J. Assmann, the vehicle for memories to be transmitted into the cultural memory is the 'memory figure'. These memory figures, when taken together, thus act as the building blocks for cultural memory.<sup>45</sup> It should be noted here that J. Assmann was not the first to describe this concept – he states himself that he is building on the work of Maurice Halbwachs in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the original developer of the concept of collective memory, but where Halbwachs refers to these as 'memory images' and discusses specifically how images play a part in this system, J. Assmann correctly expands the concept to include narrative forms.<sup>46</sup> Memory figures allow ideas to become collective memories by taking on a more concrete form, through the use of narratives and symbolic images or icons.<sup>47</sup> Of course, the creation of a referential image, or the telling of

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<sup>40</sup> Kansteiner (2002) p.181.

<sup>41</sup> Kansteiner (2002) p.182; Dessinguè (2015) p.92.

<sup>42</sup> Kansteiner (2002) p.192; Dessinguè (2015) p.98-9.

<sup>43</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.20 – that they were conflated by J. Assmann is a demonstration of the absence of a clear boundary between them.

<sup>44</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.20-21.

<sup>45</sup> The parallels between this concept and Roller's treatment of Roman *exempla* will be discussed in detail later.

<sup>46</sup> Halbwachs (1992) p.41-45; Assmann, J. (2011) p.23-24.

<sup>47</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.23-24.

a narrative, does not guarantee that its message will be remembered – not in the social memory, and certainly not in the cultural. In order for a memory figure to be created, it must fulfil certain specific requirements that enable the psychological internalisation of the idea each memory figure represents.

Many of J. Assmann's conclusions on the three 'components' of memory figures are based on Halbwach's work on the nature of collective memory. J. Assmann argues that memory in a culture cannot survive purely through the memory of individuals. He says that memories are born through communication, and that the only way a memory can become part of the collective (read 'social') memory is through reference to a particular time and a place, the first of the three major components of memory figures.<sup>48</sup> The importance of space to collective and individual memory is extremely well covered, notably by Nora's work on *lieux de mémoire*, a term which is often used as a stock phrase within memory studies.<sup>49</sup> While the concept of 'memory spaces' is worthwhile and well-recognised in scholarship, the use of Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, I think, implies a connection to Nora's wider ideas which often does not exist, Nora's work being very particular to how memory interacts with space in modern-era France.<sup>50</sup>

Also key to the creation of a memory in the collective is its significance to the group. J. Assmann says that the second key element of a memory figure is that something is not remembered by a collective, unless it is felt to be relevant to its own society. As J. Assmann asserts, 'only an important past is remembered, and only a remembered past can become important'.<sup>51</sup> These memories become the basis of teaching much of how the society functions, including its morality. Assmann discusses the use of the myth of Masada by modern Israelis as an example of this. Masada is used as an embodiment of Judaeon military virtue, and new recruits to the Israeli army swear allegiance at the site in order to imply their commitment to these virtues. It is not significant purely because of the truth of its historical significance, but it is crucial to justifying the actions of the modern nation. He also proposes the example of a noble family, whose station is defined by what people know about their history.<sup>52</sup> Halbwachs originally put it: "As soon as each person and each historical fact has permeated this memory, it is transposed into a teaching, a notion, or a system of ideas".<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Halbwachs (1992) p.200; Assmann, J. (2011) p.24-25.

<sup>49</sup> See Connerton (1989) p.37; Alcock (2001) p.326; Galinsky (2015) p.2. Kansteiner also highlights the importance of this – Kansteiner (2002) p.190-1.

<sup>50</sup> Nora (1996); Galinsky (2016) p.11.

<sup>51</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.59-60. The importance of 'the interests of the contemporary' are also independently alluded to by Kansteiner – Kansteiner (2002) p.180, 187-8.

<sup>52</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.25-26.

<sup>53</sup> Halbwachs (1992) p.200

The final component that makes a memory figure is its capacity for independent reconstruction.<sup>54</sup> As society changes, the past events and historical facts which the society has access to do not. Memories must be reconstructed so as to harmonise with these changes, lest a dissonance arise between a culture's values and its collective knowledge. As J. Assmann explains:

'The past itself cannot be preserved by memory, and thus it is continually subject to processes of reorganization according to the changes taking place in the frame of reference of each successive present.'<sup>55</sup>

Halbwachs makes the point that since society 'obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them...we give them a prestige that reality did not possess'.<sup>56</sup> In order for a society to value a memory, it has to be able to go through this reconstructive process. Combined, these three components – the reference to a specific time and place, the significance to the group, and the independent capacity for reconstruction – make 'memory figures', emerging out of the interplay between concepts and experiences, the means by which memory survives in a culture.

A. Assmann, on the other hand, shies away from the memory figure model of transmission of memory within a culture. For something to be transferred from the social memory to the cultural memory, she says, it needs to be externalised and objectified in the form of a symbol, thus 'extending the temporal scope indefinitely', and then these disembodied memories must be brought together with living memories.<sup>57</sup> This seems to me to be the memory figures concept applied more closely and more directly to material culture, directly naming symbols and monuments as being the transmitters of cultural memory. A. Assmann argues that the mental images of collective memory 'turn icons and stories into myths, whose most important characteristics are their persuasiveness and effective force' – the way the disembodied memories are brought into the collective is via their relevance to the group.<sup>58</sup> While A. Assmann's approach is certainly useful in recognising the singularly important role that symbols, monuments, icons and stories played in the formation of cultural memory, the memory figure concept should not be abandoned, especially in premodern

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<sup>54</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.27-28.

<sup>55</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.27. See also Nora (1996) p.3, and Assmann, A. (2016) p.18.

<sup>56</sup> Halbwachs (1992) p.51. See also p.46-48 – Halbwachs uses the analogy of re-reading a book you read as a child, only to find you're not reading what you had remembered.

<sup>57</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.20-21.

<sup>58</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.25-26.

societies, as memory figures can be recognised and mapped onto known cultural phenomena, as in Rome.

Tacitus, discussing the death of Agricola, does not only highlight the importance of the inevitability of oblivion to the functioning of *memoria*. He also makes reference to the motivating factor for individuals to remember long dead men – exemplarity. *Exempla* were an important component of Roman society, and certainly the building blocks of the Roman moral system.<sup>59</sup> Within Roman moral education, learning through *exempla* is explicitly encouraged and praised.<sup>60</sup> Bergmann surmises that ‘*memoria* was one of the primary means of transmission from one generation to another, and the key example, the *exemplum* or paradigm, was the common vehicle through which tradition was inherited’.<sup>61</sup> An example which is often summoned as exemplifying *exempla* is the display of *summi viri* in the forum of Augustus, which consisted of a display of statues of famous and exemplary men from Rome’s past, captioned with inscriptions (‘*elogia*’) giving a brief summary of their achievements.<sup>62</sup> While the *summi viri* of Augustus’ forum have been retrospectively seen as a swan song to the traditional republican treatment of exemplarity (which changed considerably under the principate, as discussed later) the principle that one should learn from the deeds of great men persists to the end of the period within our concern.<sup>63</sup> I would argue that *exempla* become the ultimate memory figures of the Roman cultural memory, and that through exemplarity, and only through exemplarity, could one hope to be entered into the Roman cultural memory as an individual, and thus achieve eternal life through memory.<sup>64</sup> To apply this model more closely, it is worth analysing *exempla*, as fundamentally explained by Roller,<sup>65</sup> to explore whether they meet the criteria for memory figures, as a means to explore the system in more detail, especially with regard to its inherent materiality.

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<sup>59</sup> For this in Roman thought in general, see Hölkeskamp (1996); Chaplin (2000) p.11-13; Lobur (2008) p.171; Langlands (2011) p.102; Newby (2016) p.320-322; Roller (2018) p.13-15. For this in Suetonius, see Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.23.

<sup>60</sup> Langlands (2018) p.47-66; Newby (2016) p.322. As an example, see Sen.*Ep.*6.5 – ‘*Longum iter est per praecepta, breve et efficax per exemplum*’ – The journey is long when taken through lectures alone, but brief and effective through *exempla*.

<sup>61</sup> Bergmann, B.A. (1994) p.225.

<sup>62</sup> See Geiger’s (2008) monograph on this topic for a full discussion; Woolf (2001) p.319; Gowing (2005) p.138-45; Lobur (2008) p.125; Bell (2008) p.2; Zanker (2010) p.209-215; Shaya (2013) p.86-7.

<sup>63</sup> As perhaps demonstrated by Tacitus, writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. While the problems with *exempla* mentioned by Gowing and Lobur, and the mythic alternatives brought to our attention by Newby, change this system considerably, they represent a change in the nature of exemplarity rather than Romans abandoning the concept entirely.

<sup>64</sup> It should be considered that, while *exempla* (as in the exemplary historical figures) are memory figures in themselves, they also have many **separate** memory figures associated with them, formed around narratives of parts of their lives.

<sup>65</sup> See below, p.25-6.



While, naturally, every Roman citizen would bear a desire to resist oblivion and would attempt to escape it by commemorating themselves, it is the Roman elite that had the resources to truly attempt being committed to cultural memory.<sup>66</sup> Lobur goes so far as to say that ‘the purpose of public life was to become an *exemplum* oneself’.<sup>67</sup> These individuals were the driving force behind the creation of the Roman memory space, discussed below. They recognised that in order to be committed to Rome’s cultural memory one’s deeds must not only be committed to the memories of those alive at the time but must also be given a tangible form which enables the external inducement of memories.<sup>68</sup>

Roman society recognised very strongly the importance of the association between a specific time and place and something surviving into Roman cultural memory. The recognition of this requirement for the creation of memory figures within Roman culture is unique in its extent.<sup>69</sup> This attitude created a ‘memory landscape’ in the city of Rome, the archetype and keystone of Roman culture. J. Assmann, for instance, singles out the city of Rome as a ‘sacred landscape consisting of topographical texts of cultural memory’.<sup>70</sup> The use of the term ‘topographical text’ is intriguing, and coheres well with the concept of Rome as a palimpsest – an analogy first brought to bear by Freud, using the city as a parallel of the human mind.<sup>71</sup> Freud describes Rome, and by extension the human mind, as a text, with its monuments, representing all its history overlaid upon one another and existing simultaneously. Jenkyns has also argued convincingly that the vision of Rome as a palimpsest was an idea that existed in antiquity.<sup>72</sup> The fact that Rome itself is used as an analogy for how the human mind deals with memory could go some way to explaining its influential power – any memories that would become part of the social or cultural memory must first be transmitted to the neural memory of individuals, after all. It is worth briefly exploring Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’ here, despite it being developed specifically to deal with the ideas of shared sense of community in modern nations.<sup>73</sup> In Anderson’s view, the community that is as large as a nation must be imagined, since members can never know most of their fellow members.

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<sup>66</sup> Kristensen (2015) p.673; Roller (2018) p.9-10.

<sup>67</sup> Lobur (2008) p.176.

<sup>68</sup> Assmann, A. (2016) p.12.

<sup>69</sup> Gregory (1994) p.83; Elsner (2003) p.211; Alcock (2001) p.327; Petersen (2011) p.2; Galinsky (2016) p.20, on Porphyrio on Hor.*Carm.*1.2.15. Kousser’s statement that Roman ‘memory was preserved above all through monuments, rather than texts’ is perhaps undervaluing the importance of oral transmission of memory, but serves to demonstrate the supremacy of physical monuments within the system of *memoria* – Kousser (2015) p.34.

<sup>70</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.24, 44. Larmour and Spencer portray Roman city-walkers as seeking ‘anchors’ to fix ‘their floating and fragmented subjectivity’ – Larmour and Spencer (2007) p.18.

<sup>71</sup> See Freud (1963) p.16-17, and discussions by Edwards (1996) p.27-8; Gowing (2005) p.154-6; Flower (2006) p.276; Larmour & Spencer (2007) p.1-3; Galinsky (2014) p.2-3.

<sup>72</sup> See Jenkyns (2014).

<sup>73</sup> Anderson (1991) p.5-6.

Nevertheless, within the mind of every individual member ‘lives the image of their communion’.<sup>74</sup> The ‘Romanness’ of individual Roman citizens is certainly not uniform, and if we were to think of them or their culture as ‘Roman’, unified with the other ‘Romans’, then this unification must be imagined. I would follow Dench, who argues that Roman identity was rooted in Roman topography, in saying that the city of Rome itself, was the incarnation of this ‘imagined community’.<sup>75</sup> Thus the city *defines* Roman culture, and adapts as the culture adapts. Galinsky, along these lines, states that Rome acted to reconfigure the memory of the entire empire – a true *caput mundi*.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps the concept that best demonstrates the recognised power of associating memory with place is the concept of the *ars memoriae*, ‘the art of memory’. While other techniques exist, that which is known as the ‘method of loci’ or the ‘architectural mnemonic’ seems to prevail even today, and dominates the Roman tradition to the exclusion of all else.<sup>77</sup> Entire works have been dedicated to the topic of the *ars memoriae*, notably Yates’s monograph on ‘The Art of Memory’.<sup>78</sup> Cicero, in the philosophical work *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, comments on the pure power of monuments to influence. In the dialogue with Piso Calpurnianus, which takes place during a stroll through Athens in 79 BC, Cicero has Piso make this point while walking through the old Academy of Antiochus:

*Equidem etiam curiam nostram—Hostiliam dico, non hanc novam, quae minor mihi esse videtur, posteaquam est maior—solebam intuens Scipionem, Catonem, Laelium, nostrum vero in primis avum cogitare; tanta vis admonitionis inest in locis; ut non sine causa ex iis memoriae ducta sit disciplina.*

‘For my own part even the sight of our senate-house at home (I mean the Curia Hostilia, not the present new building, which looks to my eyes smaller since its enlargement) used to call up to me thoughts of Scipio, Cato, Laelius, and chief of all, my grandfather; such powers of suggestion do places possess. No wonder the scientific training of the memory is based upon locality.’<sup>79</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Anderson (1991) p.6-7.

<sup>75</sup> Dench (2005) p.4; Favro (1999) p.205.

<sup>76</sup> Galinsky (2015) p.5.

<sup>77</sup> Gowing (2005) p.16-17; Hughes (2014) p.112; Orlin (2016) p.118.

<sup>78</sup> See Yates (1966) p.17-41, for Yates’ treatment on the three main Roman sources for *ars memoriae* – Cicero’s *De Oratore* (Book II.lxxxvi), Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria* (XI.ii.17-22) and the anonymously authored textbook *Ad Herennium* (III xvi-xxiv). All of these sources recommend the architectural mnemonic.

<sup>79</sup> Cicero.*de.fin.*5.1.2, Trans. Rackham, H. (1914). Note that the memories being roused are those of exemplary ancestors. Later in the same dialogue, Cicero says that he agrees with Piso’s general point – *Ego autem tibi, Piso, assentior usu hoc venire, ut acrius aliquanto et attentius de claris viris locorum admonitu cogitemus* (‘But I, Piso, agree with you; it is a common experience that places do strongly stimulate the imagination and vivify our ideas of famous men.’) – Cicero.*de.fin.*5.2.4.

Edwards notes, commenting on this passage, that the power of real places for suggestion certainly inspired this memory technique.<sup>80</sup> Yates comments that the buildings of ancient Rome uniquely contributed to Cicero's viewpoint in the *de oratore* – that he was surrounded by a memory landscape when speaking, allowing him to utilise it in memorising his speeches.<sup>81</sup> Considering this – that Roman thought advocated the use of tying memories to imagined places – it is not hard to see how Rome's physical presence could be seen as an embodiment of the cultural memory of the Roman people.<sup>82</sup>

An understanding of the city's topography and places within it defined how Rome's past was imagined, much more than an understanding of the strict chronology.<sup>83</sup> Individuals could explore, or simply experience even a small area of the city and immerse themselves in the zeitgeists of previous eras by happenstance.<sup>84</sup> Larmour and Spencer remind us that this does not always provide a consistent image of the city, however, as the memory figures of Rome often produced contradictions and paradoxes between the differing narratives that were on display.<sup>85</sup> The Roman memory spaces were arenas for competition between those wishing to save themselves from oblivion, and inevitably power and wealth gave the elite an advantage in this. In comparison to the monuments made to memorialise the lives of emperors or senators, funerary monuments of purely 'private' individuals are unable to compete. While they are important to those who already care about that particular individual or family, they are unlikely to draw the interest of posterity, except *en masse* as a representation of the age to which they belonged, especially when it is considered that even this relatively marginal sphere in which they reside is highly competitive. A desire to become part of this landscape, and thus recognisably a part of Rome's cultural memory is what drove Rome's continued mania for monumentalisation and memorialisation.

Physically entering this memory space, and being noticed, however, does not directly lead to being remembered, and to 'eternal life' in the memory of the Roman people. If citizens have no reason to commit an individual to their memory, no number of statues or arches will

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<sup>80</sup> Edwards (1996) p.29-30. Bergmann argues that the dominance of architectural mnemonic is a result of the 'largely illiterate' Roman society, leading to a reliance on visual media – Bergmann, B.A. (1994) p.225. I disagree with this being the cause of the dominance of this technique, since our sources are exclusively from the elite, whose literacy would have given them access to alternative inspirations for their *ars memoriae*. Surely if these literate elites are advocating the architectural mnemonic, then there is a recognised supremacy of places for influencing memory above texts beyond practicality for the general populace? Nevertheless, the illiteracy of the Roman society would certainly have played a role in the development of the Roman memory space, as individuals would seek to influence 'the masses'.

<sup>81</sup> Yates (1966) p.20.

<sup>82</sup> Shaya speaks of monuments creating 'common spaces of memory' which create the illusion of unified communal beliefs – Shaya (2013) p.84.

<sup>83</sup> Edwards (1996) p.42-43.

<sup>84</sup> Larmour and Spencer (2007) p.21.

<sup>85</sup> Larmour and Spencer (2007) p.23

convince them otherwise, except perhaps as a paradigm of arrogance, referred to whenever someone makes a similarly foolish attempt to immortalise themselves. This sentiment is clearly expressed by Tacitus in the *Agricola* passage quoted above, when he effectively admonishes the ‘reliance’ on bronze and marble to ensure one’s transition into the memory of posterity. Through the framework of *exempla*, Roman society recognised the second key component of a memory figure – relevance to the group. J. Assmann, in fact, specifically refers to ‘elements of teaching’ when explaining how memory figures become relevant to a society.<sup>86</sup> The use of *exempla* in this way is easily demonstrable, as has been mentioned earlier. The fact that Roman society placed such importance on the *mos maiorum* would have further intensified the degree to which these *exempla* remained relevant in Roman society, and would have motivated their creation. Roman culture was especially concerned with the creation of memory figures tied to the actions of individual people. In Rome, significant acts were inevitably attached to individuals, who were closely associated with the aforementioned physical monumentality.<sup>87</sup>

*Exempla* can also fulfil the final requirement for the creation of a memory figure, which is the independent capacity for reconstruction. Each individual *exemplum* represents a character whose multi-faceted life and personality can be manipulated and referred to in order to suit any particular concern in the present. Langlands convincingly argues against the traditional view that *exempla* are rigid and unchanging, that they provide a dogma which Roman society must follow.<sup>88</sup> Their strength rather lies in their ‘open-ended flexibility and enduring moral relevance’, while maintaining the façade of being clear and universal moral guidelines.<sup>89</sup> We can reason that, in order to maintain this façade of timelessness, any acknowledgement of the reconstructability component of *exempla* would be suppressed. After all, if their ‘reconstructability’ were to be recognised, the confidence in the system to faithfully ensure your life-after-death would be damaged.

Much of what has already been discussed on the topic of *exempla* makes sense if viewed in this way, and Roller is as fundamental to the study of Roman exemplarity as Halbwachs is to collective memory. Roller lists four components to an exemplary figure.<sup>90</sup> The first is the ‘action’, the necessity for the exemplary character to have performed something

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<sup>86</sup> Assmann, J. (2011) p.25-26.

<sup>87</sup> Galinsky (2014) p.2-3. Significantly, they were also *historical* individuals, where other cultures preferred to learn moral lessons from mythological figures – Kousser (2015) p.40-41, Newby (2016) p.312-333.

<sup>88</sup> Langlands (2011); Langlands (2018) p.141-65. See also Roller (2018) p.17, 21-2 on reconstructability.

<sup>89</sup> Langlands (2011) p.102, 122.

<sup>90</sup> Roller (2004) p.4-6. Roller later redefines these components as sequential steps – Roller (2009) p.216-217; Roller (2018) p.4-9. See also Langlands’ model, which focuses more deeply on the content of the *exempla*, rather than how it is preserved in the cultural memory – Langlands (2018) p.29-45.

worthy of imitation or avoidance. This aspect seems to match fairly well to the necessity of a memory figure to be relevant to the group since, as Roller states, the action must be one that is 'regarded as embodying crucial social values'.<sup>91</sup> The second, third and fourth are all expressed as being part of the same system. The initial component of this combined system is the audience that witnessed the act for which the *exemplum* is famous, which Roller defines as the 'primary audience'. These are the social and neural memories created by the fame of the men themselves, which are later transferred to the cultural memory by the 'memory figure' of the *exemplum*.<sup>92</sup> The next step is commemoration of this deed. Roller states that the purpose of monuments was to produce a 'secondary audience' of the famous actions of an individual, so that people who had not witnessed an event first-hand could learn of it through the monument.<sup>93</sup> Of course, this relates to the necessity of a memory figure to have an attachment to a particular time and place which, as discussed above, can be fulfilled by the creation of monuments. A monument, in principle, is meant not only to record the deeds or the existence of a man, but also to endorse them. The primary audience's reaction is commemorated, and the secondary audience is invited to agree with it.<sup>94</sup> This would also allow a synergy between the oral history tradition and the monuments of the city, as oral histories refer to the deeds of an individual whose monuments can be recognised – perhaps the monuments provide the reference to the time and place, while the texts and oral histories provide the environment of social communication in which social memories become cultural.<sup>95</sup> The final component listed by Roller is imitation, which seems to me to be representing the reconstruction aspect of memory figures, as he points out that imitators can be similarly commemorated and celebrated. This imitation can also act as a representation of the overall 'success' of the system.<sup>96</sup> This survey and reconsideration of *exempla* is not intended to replace Roller, his model still being incredibly important in understanding the Roman peculiarities surrounding the system of Roman exemplarity (such as *exempla* usually representing some form of *virtus*). However, contextualising *exempla* within memory studies in this way helps us to understand how the system functioned and how it could be manipulated. In particular, their role as memory figures and as vehicles for transferring collective memories from the short-term social memory into the long-term cultural memory unveils the supports which would be required to develop and sustain them in both kinds of collective memory, as defined by Aleida Assmann.

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<sup>91</sup> Roller (2004) p.4; Roller (2018) p.5. Langlands argues that is important that the 'action' must form a coherent narrative, with a central protagonist and the necessary narrative components of a story – Langlands (2018) p.29-31.

<sup>92</sup> Also defined as the act being evaluated by contemporaries - Roller (2018) p.6; Langlands (2018) p.31-45.

<sup>93</sup> Roller (2004) p.5; Roller (2018) p.6-7.

<sup>94</sup> Roller (2004) p.5

<sup>95</sup> Wiseman (2014) p.57-62.

<sup>96</sup> Roller (2004) p.5-6; Roller (2018) p.8.

For instance, since the social memory is carried by communication, a focus on what would create this communication among citizens is important, as symbolic media can only act as a support to this kind of memory, and are unlikely to generate it. For the cultural memory, on the other hand, the survival and reproduction of symbolic media are more important, and these become the true embodiment of the memory figure.

To return to the forum of Augustus, the concept of the *summi viri* and the material expression of this demonstrates all three components.<sup>97</sup> While the monument continued to exist it would act as an archive of the memories of the men included, but without their deeds, and the continued relevance of these deeds, the memory of a common man would be meaningless to Roman society at large, and there would be no reason to bring his name to mind if he was not known personally.<sup>98</sup> Augustus' construction of the monument also demonstrates their reconstructability. Surely, their placement in a strictly Augustan context, and thus their use to promote strictly Augustan values, demonstrates that *exempla*, as any functional memory figure, could be changed and reconstructed to fit the purposes of successive presents.<sup>99</sup> Augustus thus benefits by association, and garners legitimacy for his reforms and regime, demonstrating the political motivations for reconstruction of memory figures. This reconstruction of republican *exempla* also demonstrates a significant point in the history of exemplarity. Over the course of the first century of the principate, the panoply of *exempla* available to the people, and especially those that continue to be physically memorialised, becomes dominated by figures from the imperial family.<sup>100</sup> In a striking parallel with the diminishing power of the senate as compared to the *princeps* (thus demonstrating the recognised, real political power which control of *memoria* gave the ruling authority, discussed in full below) Augustus begins this process by having himself set up as the 'primary' *exemplum*.<sup>101</sup> As Gowing demonstrates, by the time of Trajan, the rows of *summi viri* in the forum of Augustus are supplemented by the *clipei* portraits of exemplary members of the imperial family, past and present, in Trajan's forum.<sup>102</sup> By the end of the imperial period, exemplarity had been almost completely monopolised by the imperial family, and emperors wished to become *exempla* both for their citizens and for future emperors.<sup>103</sup> This is most clearly manifested in the deification of emperors – by the end of the first century, emperors

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<sup>97</sup> Bell (2008) p.2.

<sup>98</sup> Hope (2011) p.xv.

<sup>99</sup> Chaplin (2000) p.202; Lobur (2008) p.125, Orlin (2016) p.139.

<sup>100</sup> This transformation of the role of exemplarity parallels increased imperial control of *memoria* in general – Kousser (2015) p.40.

<sup>101</sup> Lobur (2008) p.28-29, 171-4. See p.100-111 especially for this as seen in Velleius Paterculus.

<sup>102</sup> Gowing (2005) p.138-150. This is discussed in more detail below, p.181.

<sup>103</sup> Bell (2008) p.11-12. Newby argues that the rise of the emperor as the primary exemplum caused discord between the praise for republican heroes and the inherited exemplarity of the imperial period, leading to the rise of mythic exemplarity on private funerary sarcophagi – Newby (2016) p.333.

were assumed to be consecrated by default after their death.<sup>104</sup> One can find a demonstration of the ultimate consequence of this process in Eutropius, writing in the late fourth century. Eutropius ends his brief account of the life and achievements of Trajan with a note on the reception of his memory, echoing Tacitus' *Agricola*. He mentions that at the inauguration of emperors in his day the memories of Augustus and Trajan are invoked– '*Felicio Augusto, melior Traiano*'; may you be more fortunate than Augustus, and better than Trajan.<sup>105</sup>

There is one further consequence, however, of this process, and one that should also be considered as a motivating factor for those seeking posthumous commemoration. Since Roman cultural memory was formed around *exempla*, they were inevitably used to justify the actions of people in posterity, and thus by altering the repertoire of *exempla* from which Roman society could choose, one alters how the society operates.<sup>106</sup> At the very least, a changing perception of certain actions that were associated with celebrated figures would influence how an individual would perceive these actions in future. After all, if *exempla* were the main medium for teaching Roman values, then the addition of new or alternative *exempla* would change how these values were taught, and so in practice, what these values were. In other words, the political opinion of the Roman public was, for the most part, drawn from their cultural memory, and any change to this cultural memory would have the power to influence political opinion in the future. Pre-existing *exempla* were also susceptible to being manipulated in ways unforeseeable by the exemplary person themselves. The aforementioned redevelopment of the concept of *exempla* itself into a particularly imperial phenomenon could be seen as a demonstration of this on a grand scale. On an individual level, politicians in the future could associate themselves with their predecessors through their own monuments by way of legitimising their own actions, actions which do not necessarily truly follow the example that they intended to set. You can see this happening in the imitation of Alexander the Great by Pompey, and in turn, Pompey's imitation by Augustus – as exemplified by the renovation of Pompey's theatre by Augustus.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, this could potentially have effects within their own lifetime. If an individual's deeds are celebrated, and their monuments are placed throughout the city, then a citizen might easily associate this individual with the *exempla* that

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<sup>104</sup> Kienast (1996) labels emperors in his timeline of the Roman empire as either 'DAMNATIO MEMORIAE' or 'CONSECRATIO', with exceptions specifically mentioned as 'keine *Consecratio*' and/or 'keine *Damnatio memoriae*'. Flower states that this represents a misunderstanding of the system of *damnatio memoriae* – the assumption that it is a codified body of penalties – but it does demonstrate that one could read Roman history and consider that a Roman emperor is either praised to the degree that he is deified, or utterly condemned – Flower (2006) p.8. See also Varner (2004) p.6 on *damnatio* as the counterpart to *consecratio*.

<sup>105</sup> Eutropius *Brev.*8.5.

<sup>106</sup> Roller (2004) p.50.

<sup>107</sup> Zanker (1988) p.24, 147. This can also be seen in the language used in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* – See *RGDA*.20.1; Cooley (2009) p.6, 33, 34.

he or she is already aware of. The intensely and exclusively positive messages of these monuments would certainly aid this process.<sup>108</sup> This citizen might thus anticipate this individual becoming exemplary in the future, and would be more inclined to support that individual in the present.<sup>109</sup> This could be motivated either by a drive to support what he or she would interpret as moral behaviour, or even by a desire to share in some small way in their inevitable commemoration by posterity. The continuous celebration of men from one political class, or family in the empire, would also create an association in the popular imagination with this class or family with virtue itself – as certainly happened with the imperial family in the early principate.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Kousser (2015) p.40-42.

<sup>109</sup> Or possibly compete with them – Roller (2018) p.8-9.

<sup>110</sup> Flower (2006) p.277.



## ‘Damnatio memoriae’

One could easily see why individuals and authorities would seek to have some influence over such a system. *Memoria*, after all, would have not only represented the hope for the afterlife on a personal level, it would have also had a direct effect on contemporary political support. It would also have been important to citizens to ensure that this system only created *exempla* from those that were considered worthy. In the republic, it was the senate that held the reins, as they had the opportunity to choose physically to honour individuals who showed exemplary virtue (ideally speaking). Additionally, on rare occasions, they could choose to condemn the memory of an individual, though not on the scale that this would occur later in Rome’s history. These choices became increasingly politically motivated with the decline of the republic and the rise of particularly powerful individuals. These individuals sought to have complete control of Rome’s memory space, and would remove their rivals’ claim to it – the principle behind the development of Roman *damnatio memoriae*. How *damnatio* developed, and how it was used to control this memory space, are discussed further below.

This form of widespread memory sanctions was pioneered by Sulla, when he ordered the victory monuments of Marius in Rome to be destroyed.<sup>111</sup> The destruction of the Marian monument on the Capitoline, which Sulla had challenged with his own monument commemorating his own victory over Bocchus, is particularly significant here.<sup>112</sup> These attempts to erase Marius from the collective memory of Rome effectively comprised Rome’s first recognisable *damnatio memoriae*. This represented a break from the existing tradition of cooperation and competition, with posterity deciding who would be remembered between the elites vying over Rome’s memory space. By directly interfering in this process and attempting to deny Marius the possibility to be remembered positively, Sulla ‘radically rewrote the rules for the continuation of historical recollection’, as Stein-Hölkeskamp asserts.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the violence and illegality of his actions demonstrate how important he considered controlling Rome’s memory space.<sup>114</sup>

Though their implementation and consequences here were significantly different to those that came later, Sulla’s politically-motivated sanctions, as an attempt to monopolise this space, foreshadowed the eventual near-complete monopolisation of memorialisation of individuals by the imperial family in the early Empire.<sup>115</sup> The political memory sanctions

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<sup>111</sup> Calomino (2016) p.32-33.

<sup>112</sup> Suet. *Iul.* 11.1; Plut. *Vit. Caes.* 6.3; Stein-Hölkeskamp (2016) p.225-227, 228-229. See also Kousser (2015) p.33-40, 46 on the Hellenistic equivalents, and how they inspired Rome’s cultural repression; Varner (2008) p.129-30.

<sup>113</sup> Flower (2006) p.279; Stein-Hölkeskamp (2015) p.220-30.

<sup>114</sup> Stein-Hölkeskamp (2015) p.230.

<sup>115</sup> Bell (2008) p.10-11; Flower (2006) p.279-80; Stein-Hölkeskamp (2015) p.230.

innovated by Sulla and practised by other late republican leaders re-emerged, this time within *maiestas* law, as can be seen most clearly in the case of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso.<sup>116</sup> Piso's condemnation is especially well attested on account of the relatively recent discovery of inscriptions recording the *senatus consultum* that lists the sanctions against his memory.<sup>117</sup> The combination of this repeated official endorsement of memory sanctions as a method of condemnation, and the absence of any filter placed upon the monumental celebration of members of the imperial family, led to memory sanctions against members of the imperial family themselves, as they were perceived as a possible method by which this celebration could be restricted. This is what is most commonly thought of when the term *damnatio memoriae* ('the condemnation of memory') is heard.

The popular conception of Roman memory sanctions is that of a literal *damnatio memoriae*, a widespread and concerted attempt to eliminate completely the memory of an individual, so that he or she would be forgotten to posterity. *Damnatio memoriae*, however, is strictly a modern term of convenience – likely invented in Leipzig in 1689 - and there was not a single term used by Roman officials to refer to the variety of sanctions against memory applied to deceased and disgraced individuals, as has been established since Vittinghof's work in 1936.<sup>118</sup> The ways in which *damnatio memoriae* interacted with the memory culture of Rome are much more complex than a foolhardy attempt to eliminate wholeheartedly the memory of an individual through an ironically spectacular scene of destruction. Many scholars of the topic have thus shunned the term *damnatio memoriae*, in favour of, most often, 'memory sanctions', which is argued to be more neutral and less misleading. Flower, in particular, argues that the term implies a system of 'set penalties', which is not clear even in the later Empire.<sup>119</sup> Omissi puts forward the view that the Latinity of the term *damnatio memoriae* implies that it is a faithful reproduction of a Latin idea, in a similar way to how we would use *auctoritas* or *memoria*.<sup>120</sup> Nevertheless, some modern historians of the Roman period continue to use *damnatio memoriae* as if it is an uncomplicated and straightforward term which represents an easily definable Roman concept.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Flower (2006) p.279-80; Varner (2004) p.1.

<sup>117</sup> See Flower (1998); Cooley (1998); Potter (1998), and below, p.43.

<sup>118</sup> Vittinghof (1936) p.64. For other commentary on the development of the term, see Elsner (2003) p.212; Varner (2004) p.41-43; Huet (2004) p.238; Flower (2008) p.97; Petersen (2011) p.1; Rowan (2012) p.165; Galinsky (2014) p.2; Kristensen (2015) p.669; Omissi (2016) p.171. The closest equivalents in somewhat common use by late antique jurists are the terms *memoria damnata* or *memoriam accusare* – see Vittinghof (1936) p.64-74; Omissi (2016) p.171, n.5.

<sup>119</sup> Flower (1998) p.156.

<sup>120</sup> Omissi (2016) p.172.

<sup>121</sup> As pointed out by Omissi (2016) p.170; Sear (2000) p.520.

However, is the term ‘memory sanctions’ necessarily better? If we are considering an uninformed reader, someone who is unaware of the fact that *damnatio memoriae* is a modern term of convenience, then the phrase ‘Roman memory sanctions’ could potentially imply much more consistency and authority than could truthfully be attributed to the phenomenon.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore the literal meaning of the term *damnatio memoriae* is not necessarily incorrect when considering the Roman perspective. The intent to erase someone’s memory is still critical to understanding its effects on the collective memory, even if the realistic consequence of the measure was the recreation or replacement of the condemned’s identity.<sup>123</sup> I would also argue, despite the term itself not being used in antiquity and, indeed, no unified term being used in antiquity to describe the phenomenon, that the Roman people would have recognised the pattern of the material of condemned individuals coming under similar forms of attack.<sup>124</sup>

In late antiquity, the trends having had some time to become visible and recognised, the process is described as simply what happens to tyrants, as we can see in St. Jerome’s commentary on Habakkuk (Index 2).<sup>125</sup> As both Omissi and Varner point out, this demonstrates an awareness on the part of the Romans that responses to the death of a ‘bad’ emperor had become almost formulaic.<sup>126</sup> Thus the term’s Latinity is not entirely deceptive. The use of ‘memory sanctions’ as opposed to *damnatio memoriae* also loses some of the latter term’s meaning. Whereas ‘memory sanctions’ refers to, or appears to refer to, only the official, top-down, element of the condemnation of an individual’s memory, *damnatio* can also encompass the popular reception of this condemnation, or even the destruction of statues or inscriptions before there is any official condemnation. Flower admits that this is an advantage of the term as a shorthand for the entire phenomenon.<sup>127</sup> While I do not wish to condemn the use of alternative terms, since they serve their own purpose, nor endorse the misuse of *damnatio memoriae* by certain historians to imply a unified set of penalties, the term will be used throughout this thesis, as a shorthand for the destructive attacks against the material legacy of a condemned individual in the Roman period, and the direct and indirect consequences of these attacks.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> The term ‘iconoclasm’ is also occasionally used, but it has its own specific associations, especially regarding the religious implications of calling the material destroyed during the process ‘iconic’ – see Brubaker (2012) p.3-4; Kristensen (2015) p.667-8.

<sup>123</sup> Petersen (2011) p.7.

<sup>124</sup> Varner (2004) p.2.

<sup>125</sup> Jer. In. *Abacuc*.2.3.14-16 (Index 2); Varner (2004) p.1; Omissi (2016) p.171-2. See also *Cod. Theod.* 9.40.17; Clauss (1999) p.384.

<sup>126</sup> Omissi (2016) p.171-2; Varner (2004) p.1.

<sup>127</sup> Flower (2006) p.xix. See also Varner (2001a) p.46.

<sup>128</sup> See also Stewart (1999) p.245-6.

The need for a thorough, dedicated and sophisticated study of *damnatio memoriae* was recognised in Hedrick's discussion of the history of the phenomenon, which he includes to provide context for the peculiarities of late antique memory sanctions.<sup>129</sup> He states that the history of *damnatio* 'is yet to be written' and that a full account would only be appropriate for an experienced Roman historian. Prior to this, the most thorough discussion of the phenomenon known under the name *damnatio memoriae* was in Vittinghof's 1936 work,<sup>130</sup> perhaps in response to the censorship and cultural repression happening in his own time. While a comprehensive work, ranging from the early Republic to the late Empire is still to be written, Hedrick's invitation seems to have been partially answered by Varner and Flower.<sup>131</sup> Varner's 2004 work focuses entirely on *damnatio memoriae* and imperial portraiture, providing a complete survey of how the strategies used to deal with the large amount of imperial sculpture varied from emperor to emperor. Particular attention is paid to the reworking of imperial portraits, and proposals are put forth regarding the reasoning behind each decision made. In addition, an analysis of the findings as a whole is provided in the introduction, in which general trends in the imperial period are identified and the aims and effects of *damnatio memoriae* are proposed. Flower's self-stated aim is to provide an 'overview of the evolution of memory sanctions on the basis of selected examples'.<sup>132</sup> This she achieves, from Greek precedents up to the reign of Antoninus Pius, looking at all types of evidence together, particularly epigraphic, portraiture having been explored by Varner two years before.<sup>133</sup> Flower examines case studies of material for each victim of memory sanctions within the period studied, presenting the development of these sanctions from their birth to the point at which they became an expected reaction to an emperor who was not deified. She offers explanations for why particular *damnationes* were conducted in different ways to others, usually comparing each to those which came before it. Flower uses this analysis to illustrate the political change and social development that were happening at various points throughout Roman history.

Building on the work of these two, and running parallel to the boom in Roman memory studies, there has been a surge of activity in understanding the particularities of Roman memory sanctions.<sup>134</sup> Notably, Davies provides the otherwise absent insight into how *damnatio memoriae* interacted with Roman architecture, concluding that Roman pragmatism meant that they were mostly immune to the effects. She points out some significant

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<sup>129</sup> Hedrick (2000) p.91.

<sup>130</sup> Vittinghof (1936).

<sup>131</sup> Varner (2004); Flower (2006).

<sup>132</sup> Flower (2006) p.xix.

<sup>133</sup> Flower (2006) p.xxi-xxii.

<sup>134</sup> For commentary on this, see Kousser (2015) p.33; Vout (2008) p.153; Kristensen (2015) p.668.

exceptions to this rule, however, especially when it comes to private buildings.<sup>135</sup> The articles within Benoist and Daguet-Gagey's 2008 volume on the 'condemnation de mémoire' form a key part of the discipline, both in terms of interpreting the findings of Varner and Flower, as well as presenting new ideas on the artistic expression that takes place during *damnatio* and the rehabilitation of condemned individuals.<sup>136</sup> Omissi's 2016 article on *damnatio memoriae* in late antiquity as a creative process is also very significant, as will be his upcoming survey on *damnatio memoriae* in the late empire – demonstrating the continuing interest in this area of research.<sup>137</sup> Most recently, Calomino's accompaniment to the exhibition in the British Museum, *Defacing the Past, Damnation and Desecration in Imperial Rome* in 2016, builds directly upon the works of Varner and Flower, exploring the wealth of evidence in coinage for the first time in a unified study.<sup>138</sup>

### *Damnatio* and exemplarity

From the works of these scholars, it has been by now thoroughly established that the complete elimination of the condemned's memory from the collective memory was not the consequence of *damnatio*. *Damnatio*, through thorough public condemnation, provides a 'recognisable transference' from the negative predecessor to the positive successor, and thus turns the condemned into a 'foil' for the successor to compare himself favourably.<sup>139</sup> Thus, through immediate contrast, the condemned predecessor is denigrated. Galinsky presents a literary analogy – it is similar, he says, to an author recognising and referring to esteemed predecessors.<sup>140</sup> In the literary sphere, this would invite comparison between the literary ancestor and the new work. Thereby, the author hopes, he improves the perception of his work, as it is then perceived as an improvement. Juxtaposition between the images of the new regime and the destroyed remnants of that which came before (or in Galinsky's specific case, the remnants of the original on recarved portraits) would similarly invite comparison between the successor and the predecessor, improving perception of the former while further denigrating the latter. As Omissi states, commenting on the late antique commemoration of 'tyranni' on monuments by their successors (something much more direct than anything we see in the period under discussion), it is in the successor's interests to denigrate the

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<sup>135</sup> Davies (2000a) p.28-30, 42.

<sup>136</sup> See Benoist & Daguet-Gagey (2008), especially Vout (2008), de Jong & Hekster (2008) & Flower (2008).

<sup>137</sup> Omissi (2016) p.171.

<sup>138</sup> Calomino (2016).

<sup>139</sup> Galinsky (2008) p.20, 1.

<sup>140</sup> Galinsky (2008) p.20.

predecessor, as ‘the darker his tyranny, the more glorious its defeat’.<sup>141</sup> Perhaps the most concrete evidence of this deliberate creation of contrast in our period can be seen in the theories surrounding the destruction of inscriptions, ie. that the inscriptions were left erased, with a visible scar, in order to act as a monument to the disgrace of the condemned emperor.<sup>142</sup> Psychologically, this has an even greater effect, as an empty void would require the viewer to participate in reconstructing the memory of the condemned individual, thus engraining it more thoroughly into their memory.<sup>143</sup> This recalls literature again, as well as oratory, as a gap or a question is often used to invite the reader or listener to freely express the opinion that the author desires. This immediate aftermath of the destruction involved in *damnatio memoriae*, something that is particularly well covered in existing literature, allows the effort of elimination to become a form of monumentalisation for the condemned’s new-born negative identity.

Between these recent works of scholars on *damnatio*, our understanding of how this process was conducted, and why it was conducted in that way, have been enormously expanded. From their findings, we are able to understand more fully how *damnatio memoriae* interacted with the system of *memoria*. I would argue that their conclusions paint the picture of the role of *damnatio memoriae* as being the reversal of the process of becoming an *exemplum* through physical memorials. This has been recognised as an element of the memory sanctions process in the introductions of both Varner and Flower, as they say that the condemned could be used as negative *exempla* after his death, acting as a warning to posterity.<sup>144</sup> However, no study thus far has analysed *damnatio* with this in mind, only referencing it in their conclusions as a possible interpretation of the processes and their consequences. This parallel between exemplarity and *damnatio* is one of the main contributions of this work.

It is worth understanding the role of negative *exempla* within the system of Roman exemplarity. As has been mentioned, the memories of those who suffer memory sanctions would be used in future as negative *exempla*, and as warnings of the negative consequences of behaviour that goes against Roman society’s morals. While exemplarity has thus far been considered as purely a positive concept – as a status symbol – negative *exempla* were crucial to the functioning of this system in terms of moral education. Livy demonstrates this in his succinct summary of exemplarity in the preface to his work (Index 3).<sup>145</sup> Exemplarity is often

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<sup>141</sup> Omissi (2016) p.181.

<sup>142</sup> Cooley (2000b) p.2; Cooley (2012) p.312.

<sup>143</sup> Galinsky (2008) p.17.

<sup>144</sup> Varner (2004) p.2-3, 9; Flower (2006) p.6, 282. It also seems to be implied by Omissi - (2018) p.38.

<sup>145</sup> Livy praef.10 (Index 3).

taken for granted to be positive, to the extent that calling someone exemplary in English is equivalent to complimenting their virtue. Negative *exempla* are a logical consequence of the system of exemplarity, however. They need to exist within a society in order to offer a counterpoint and contrast to their positive equivalents.<sup>146</sup> Naturally, there are many and far-reaching consequences of the existence of this class of negative *exempla*. The contrast between the condemned and his immediate successor has been mentioned already, something which potentially creates a dual positive and negative *exemplum*, with each being the opposite of the other in various ways. Each individual could also be associated with a particular vice, thus being invoked later to condemn those who are seen to embody that vice in a smaller way.

When negative *exempla* are discussed, republican or even mythical examples are the most typical ones brought to mind.<sup>147</sup> However, just as the imperial positive *exempla* became the most well-known and significant in the culture of the empire, the negative *exempla* of ‘bad’ emperors became similarly famous, I argue. If we take Elagabalus as an example, his sexual exploits could have been mentioned when a political opponent is implicated in some lascivious scandal. In addition, policies associated with a condemned emperor could be condemned purely by this association. I would therefore argue that in Roman society, the negative *exempla* created by these processes were as significant in influencing morality and the image of the ‘good emperor’ as the good emperors themselves. One can see the importance of these in viewing discourse on what a good leader is, as bad emperors are cited as proof of the problems created by certain habits. For instance, Nero is cited by Dio Chrysostom in his discourse on the virtues of a sovereign in the reign of Trajan.<sup>148</sup> Nero, he says, is an example of the pitfalls of leisure, and that his passion for singing caused the abandonment of his royal dignity. The study of the use of these ‘tyrants’ in this way in text, as negative *exempla*, is certainly worthy of study itself.

This concept of a ‘tyrant’ in itself is also revealing in understanding negative *exempla* in Roman society. The Roman conception of ‘tyranny’ is, due to the variety of terms used, very difficult to pin down in the early empire. However, I would argue that the concept of a tyrant, or ‘bad’ emperor, is certainly a category of ruler that Roman writers demonstrated an awareness of.<sup>149</sup> In stoic discourse of this period, a dichotomy is described between tyrants, or

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<sup>146</sup> See Gessert (2004) p.243-44.

<sup>147</sup> See, for instance, Cic. *Dom.* 101-2, wherein Cicero invokes negative *exempla* in rhetoric, and the discussion of this passage by Roller – Roller (2018) p.234-64.

<sup>148</sup> Dio Chrys. *Or.* 3.133-135. Dio also praises Trajan for avoiding the example of Domitian in many other cases – Jones (1978) p.118.

<sup>149</sup> Paillet & Sablayrolles (1994) p.11; Sear (2000) p.520; Vout (2009) p.261-3; Omissi (2018) p.26, 301. See Madsen (2016) p.149-54 and Osgood (2016) p.188-90 for this in Dio.

bad emperors, and kings or 'legitimate sovereigns', with the imagined tyrant regularly held up for comparison with the good ruler.<sup>150</sup> Bartsch, for instance, argues that the figure of the tyrant Diogenes in Dio Chrysostom's *On Kingship* acts as a direct allegory for Domitian.<sup>151</sup> The influence of this attitude can be seen in historiography, as literary tropes are developed to describe 'bad emperors'.<sup>152</sup>

The *Panegyricus* of Pliny the younger also very clearly demonstrates this dichotomous attitude in several ways. The extensive contrast between the virtuous Trajan and his villainous predecessor Domitian is significant in this regard. Pliny comparing the *optimus princeps*, a title which Trajan would later officially earn, with the *malos principes* shows the conception of Roman emperors as either 'good' or 'bad'.<sup>153</sup> Furthermore, Pliny appears to assess both the past and the future emperors of the Roman Empire, and concludes that 'tyranny' is an inherent and unavoidable part of the system of the principate. Hoffer argues that Pliny is aware of the potential for future emperors to choose not to follow the example of the *optimus princeps*, with no presumption that Trajan's rule will usher in an age of impeccable emperors.<sup>154</sup> Pliny also demonstrably regards Domitian and Nero to be part of the same category of rulers, as he denigrates Domitian by making reference to his defence or attempted rehabilitation of Nero.<sup>155</sup> In late antiquity, this dichotomy becomes much more explicit – the term '*tyrannus*' is used much more often, even on public inscriptions, as the language used in public discourse becomes more direct.<sup>156</sup> In late antique retrospectives, emperors seem to be either assessed as 'tyrants', or good emperors – *divi*. The introduction to the *Historia Augusta's* biography of Elagabalus could be seen as a demonstration of this, as the author(s) list a number of emperors whom they believe exemplify both categories.<sup>157</sup> Hence, I do not believe

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<sup>150</sup> Seneca *De Clem.* 1.11.4; Dio Chrys. *Or.* 1.66–84, 2.67–70, 3.38–44, 4.55–139; Hoffer (2012) p.145-6; Omissi (2016) p.180-1; Christol (1997) p.52. The discussion of these two modes of rule is clearly inspired by, and even often directly making reference to, the relative quality of emperors contemporary to the writer despite the use of archaising terms, or using euphemisms in place of the names of the emperors in question.

<sup>151</sup> Bartsch (2012) p.179-80.

<sup>152</sup> See Barton, T. (1994) p.51-52, 58; Charles (2002), esp. p.19-20, 25; Varner (2004) p.7; Madsen (2016) p.149-54; Osgood (2016) p.188-90; Calomino (2016) p.104; Omissi (2018) p.27-8. Sommer's assessment concludes that these emperors are excluded from the system of Roman morality, with them framed as an 'operational accident' (*Betriebunsfall*) in the system of the principate - Sommer (2004) p.97-98.

<sup>153</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 90.1, 40.3.

<sup>154</sup> Hoffer (2012) p.214-5.

<sup>155</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 53.3-6.

<sup>156</sup> Humphries (2008) p.86-7; Omissi (2016) p.175-181; Omissi (2018) p.30. For instance, see the inscription on the arch of Constantine – *CIL* VI 1139.

<sup>157</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 1.1-3. See also SHA *Pesc.Nig.* 1.1-2, in which the author(s) demonstrate their awareness that tyrants are made tyrants by the victories of other men (... *tyrannos aliorum victoria fecerit*). – Humphries (2008) p.86.



the term 'tyrant' misrepresents the Roman view of their 'bad' emperors.<sup>158</sup> The use of the term 'tyrant' also avoids clumsy terminology such as 'condemned emperor', 'bad' emperor or even 'emperor who has been subject to *damnatio memoriae*', terms which are equally complicated and offer no advantage in terms of readability. This apparent 'canon' of tyrants that is present in Roman discourse also further demonstrates their transformation into negative *exempla*. Therefore, I will be using the term 'tyrant' throughout this thesis, as a shorthand for an emperor who has suffered *damnatio memoriae*.

## Thesis Overview and Methodology

Though *damnatio memoriae* is also used to describe the memory sanctions made against any famous individual in the Roman period, this work will deal with how the *damnatio memoriae* of emperors interacted with their 'material legacy', and the part this interaction played in the recreation of an emperor's memory as negative. The consequences of this recreation on the image of both the condemned and his successor will also be explored.

The first major departure of this thesis from the existing scholarship will be the examination of *damnatio memoriae* with the idea of creating a negative *exemplum* in mind. As we have seen above, there are some elements of the already-established model of *damnatio memoriae* that betray its function to transform the memory of the condemned into negative *exempla*. Returning to the idea of the memory figure, the 'anti-monuments' created by the destructive acts of *damnatio* function as the necessary references to time and space that memory figures need to survive into Roman cultural memory. Their embodiment of particular vices evidences their relevance to the group, in addition, as can be seen in the historiography. However, clearly, there are many elements of memory figures that are not sufficiently covered by existing work on *damnatio*, or at least they have not been recognised. For instance, while relevance to the group can be demonstrated through discussion in historical text, the aforementioned supremacy of material memorialisation and the lack of near-universal literacy means that without a more permanent incarnation of this in the material space, it is difficult to say that this would be enough for the negative *exemplum* to enter the cultural memory. Only by examining *damnatio* fundamentally as more than denigration – as a process of re-remembering – can its various components be fully understood.

In addition, the nature of a memory figure and the nature of cultural memory mean that this transformative process must extend far beyond the initial acts of destruction. The ability for a memory figure to be transformed later to maintain its relevance, for instance, can

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<sup>158</sup> This is as opposed to *tyrannus*, used by Omissi, the Latinity of which is only appropriate for the discussion of the period in which that term is openly used and common.

occur long after the last of the contemporary generation had died out. The continued existence of material remnants of the condemned's original identity, as discussed below, would also permit further interaction with this identity after the initial acts of repression. Furthermore, the contribution of the immediate 'spectacle' of destruction that began *damnatio memoriae* to this repression and the creation of the new negative *exemplum* should not be understated. The existing scholarship has thus far focussed on the direct aftermath of the destructive acts and the perception of the destroyed objects while they remained visible. Therefore, the study of both the immediate 'spectacle' of *damnatio*, and the long-term consequences of this destruction, is the second major contribution of this thesis.

One critical issue with the existing scholarship is the methodology commonly employed. The full extent of the consequences of the act of condemning an emperor's entire physical posthumous presence to oblivion cannot be thoroughly explored by examining the *damnatio memoriae* of each emperor in turn, as this 'physical legacy' endures long after the immediate death of the tyrant.<sup>159</sup> In addition, the nature of our field means that, for any individual case study, there are significant gaps in the evidence. For instance, while we have a number of detailed narrative descriptions of the spectacle of the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian, we must rely purely on the notoriously unreliable *Historia Augusta* for that of Elagabalus, at least in terms of literary sources.<sup>160</sup> In order to fully understand a phenomenon such as this, which spans the entire Roman imperial period, an approach must be used that recognises the unique nature of each case study. Thus, for each chapter in this thesis, two case studies have been chosen of condemned emperors that best evidence the part of the process of *damnatio* that is under discussion. In addition, examples from other cases in the period have been discussed where appropriate. By keeping other cases in mind, we are able to better extrapolate conclusions about the process across the entire period. This approach also reduces the potential issues stemming from the paucity of material and textual evidence for certain emperors, something which is certainly exacerbated when studying the targets of *damnatio*.

The evidence that has been used has also hindered the study of *damnatio memoriae* in the past. By restricting oneself to one category of material, as Varner did with imperial portraiture, one is prevented from understanding the full story of *damnatio memoriae*, as every object existed in context of another.<sup>161</sup> In order to reach more accurate conclusions about the phenomenon as a whole, therefore, this study will be conducted with all the components of the condemned's 'material legacy' in mind. This includes statues, inscriptions,

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<sup>159</sup> Hostein (2004) p.221, speaking specifically of numismatics.

<sup>160</sup> Below, p.162.

<sup>161</sup> Hostein (2004) p.220.

and architecture, all of which have received some attention with regards to how they were treated after memory sanctions. Coinage, of course, would also come under this banner, the defacement of which has been thus far significantly understudied – though this thesis will not focus on coinage directly, it is necessary to acknowledge its role in the phenomenon, and a more thorough understanding of the process can be gleaned if numismatic evidence is included.<sup>162</sup> The implicit justification for such restrictions in the past has been that to attempt to tackle all the material at once over all periods of the whole Roman world would be beyond the scope of even a large monograph. The use of the case studies of emperors allows a much wider examination of shorter individual time periods.

Furthermore, I will be looking exclusively at the city of Rome during this thesis, on account of the supremacy of Rome above other places in the empire when it comes to Roman cultural memory.<sup>163</sup> Because of this supremacy, it is difficult to argue that it would truly be a representative example of the typical in Roman culture. Nevertheless, a study which focuses on Rome provides its own advantages. For one, it is well known that the reception and acceptance of *damnatio memoriae* that originated in Rome varied enormously between provinces.<sup>164</sup> It thus seems necessary, unless one is doing a comparative study, to consider the effects of *damnatio* separately in each location. In addition, the aforementioned function of Rome as the archetype of Roman cultural memory, and thus Roman ethnic and moral identity, gives the city an extraordinary role in Roman culture. Understanding what the consequences are for Rome thus gives us some understanding of what the consequences are for ‘Rome’, a word used often to represent Roman culture, people, history and identity all simultaneously. Thus, while a study which excludes the provinces cannot pretend to give us an idea of the consequences of *damnatio* on a tyrant’s perception in the cultural memory of the Roman world as a whole, Rome is exceptional enough, both in practical terms and in its role as the *exemplum* for Roman culture, that it certainly deserves its own focus.

In the course of this thesis, I will also be looking specifically at the *damnatio memoriae* of emperors. The aforementioned drastic change in the nature of *exempla*, becoming monopolised by the imperial family, means that there is too much of a disconnect with the republican system to talk confidently of aspects of the phenomenon which are shared before and after the end of the Republic. This is certainly the case for those aspects which are not sufficiently covered by Flower’s treatment of memory sanctions from their republican

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<sup>162</sup> The absence of study of *damnatio* on coinage has recently been partially corrected by Calomino’s work on the subject – Calomino (2016).

<sup>163</sup> See above, Crawford (2008) p.47. Flaig specifically mentioned the *plebs urbana* of Rome as being one of the axes of ‘acceptance’ of a Roman emperor – the influence of individual citizens was greater in Rome than anywhere else in the wider empire – Flaig (2010) p.280; Flaig (2015) p.89.

<sup>164</sup> Lefebvre (2004) p.216.

beginnings to the middle of the second century. In addition, the society and bodies which undertook this condemnation are vastly different in the imperial area when compared with the republican precedent. Republican *damnationes* were instigated either by political rivals, or the senate at large, hoping to represent the will of the masses, whereas in the imperial period, memory sanctions were called either by the successor, or by the senate in direct support of the successor. This presents an intriguing dynamic which is unique to the imperial period – the party instigating the memory sanctions, and the redevelopment of his predecessor into a negative *exemplum*, was also inherently attempting to become a counterpart positive *exemplum* himself.<sup>165</sup>

In addition, the period under discussion will be up until the beginning of the crisis of the third century. At this point, the frequent usurpation of emperors and subsequent *damnationes* not only vastly change the way that these memory sanctions were received, but also create serious issues for citizens' 'faith in the system'. The city of Rome, in particular, is vastly changed in role, as the cultural epicentre of Roman society begins to shift away from the ancient city. The *damnationes* of the third century and beyond, as Varner observes, change significantly in how they are carried out and the messages they convey.<sup>166</sup> In late antiquity, the messages of *damnatio* become closely intertwined with issues of religion in a way that they were not in the early empire. In addition, this will expand on the scope covered by Flower somewhat, who ended her most major work with consideration of the memory of Hadrian under Antoninus Pius. The number of individuals considered in this thesis is short enough to list them all here, in chronological order: Caligula, Nero, Vitellius, Domitian, Didius Julianus, Commodus, Macrinus and Elagabalus.<sup>167</sup> Within this period, of course, there will be a great deal of change with regards to how *damnatio memoriae* came to function, as it became more formulaic with time. While this change over time is not the subject of this thesis, it will be recognised when it can be identified, in order not to misconstrue any one case study as being archetypal of the entire early to middle Empire.

Naturally, however, case studies have been chosen that best represent the wide range of individuals in one category of individuals condemned under *damnatio memoriae*. While a truly comprehensive examination of the phenomenon in antiquity would be near-impossible to achieve within one work, it is certainly true that this approach leaves many important

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<sup>165</sup> A possible exception would be Geta, who was only ever co-emperor with Severus and/or Caracalla. The relationship between him and the emperor responsible for his official condemnation is greatly different to the other examples discussed here, perhaps explaining the unique extent to which his *damnatio memoriae* was carried out, and as such will be excluded from discussion here.

<sup>166</sup> Varner (2004) p.213; Omissi (2018) p.17.

<sup>167</sup> For discussion of this 'canon' of tyrants, near-universally condemned in the literary sources, see above, p.38-9.

instances of *damnatio* unconsidered. The *damnatio memoriae* of non-emperors in the period are excluded entirely. Members of the imperial family, such as the twenty-four women who suffered condemnation of some form,<sup>168</sup> and politicians such as Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso,<sup>169</sup> also suffered *damnatio memoriae*, and parallel studies of their cases could be revealing for understanding Roman cultural repression as a whole. Finally, one emperor within the period whose condemnation is popularly considered to be archetypal for Roman *damnatio*, Geta, has not been examined, despite the extraordinary circumstances and methods of condemnation no doubt revealing much about the practical actions that came alongside official condemnation.<sup>170</sup>

In all these cases, however, comparative study with those of the emperors that have been chosen would be very difficult without significant qualifications. The non-imperial examples represent an entirely different power relationship than between a condemned emperor and his successor. In the case of the women, it was the man who had been responsible for the promotion of her as a positive *exemplum* of female virtue that was then responsible for the transformation into something negative. In cases like Piso's, the negative characterisation was that of someone treasonous against the state, rather than that of an evil tyrant, and so the citizens of Rome would have been less concerned with his condemnation. The mechanisms and intended purpose of *damnatio* also change over time, meaning that later examples cannot be as directly compared to those that came before. Finally, Geta's memory was condemned by an emperor who had reigned with him, again a very different power relationship than that of the condemned tyrants with their successors. In addition, its extent and the nature of the evidence for this extent implies a different form of implementation than in other *damnationes*. In this case, it appears that it was much more Caracalla's attempt to erase evidence of the positive relationship that they had, rather than an attempt to turn him into a negative *exemplum*. Studies of each of these different categories of *damnationes* would be worthwhile, and a study that compares these to the examples of the emperors that I examine would also be revealing. Nevertheless, as has been stated, a focus on one particular type of relationship that often resulted in *damnatio* allows us to identify the similarities between these relationships, and we can more confidently derive conclusions from the analyses made on them. Therefore, though it may be that many of the findings of this study are specific to this category of *damnationes*, a deep and thorough understanding of this category is especially valuable.

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<sup>168</sup> Varner (2001b) p.43.

<sup>169</sup> See Flower (1998); Cooley (1998); Potter (1998).

<sup>170</sup> For discussion of the unusual extent and circumstances surrounding the *damnatio memoriae* of the emperor Geta, see Stewart (2003) p.279; Elsner (2003) p.214-5; Cooley (2012) p.313-4.

As has been stated, there are two key stages relative to the *damnatio memoriae* events which have not been studied as thoroughly as they deserve to have been. By developing a more thorough grasp on the reception of the spectacle of the destruction of the material legacy itself, and the more indirect consequences of this condemnation on the whole body of material associated with the condemned emperor, the tyrant's 'material legacy', we can more fully explore the real impact that *damnatio memoriae* had on his perception within Roman cultural memory. These two stages will form the two halves of this thesis, which are then divided into two chapters each. The consequences of the public spectacle of destruction itself will be discussed in the first section of the thesis. The first will cover the nuances of the 'spectacle', and the consequences which witnessing or participating in it would have had on the identity of the target. This immediate effect that *damnatio memoriae* had on the social memory of the condemned is significantly underrepresented in existing scholarship, with the deepest discussion of the matter thus far being a paragraph of Varner's.<sup>171</sup> I believe that the event of the destruction, and the fact that it was witnessed and participated in by ordinary people, is critical to understanding the process of *damnatio memoriae*, as it forms the 'first impression' of the negative identity of the condemned individual. The violent destruction of the effigies of the condemned emperor ought also, I believe, to be considered alongside popular violence of other kinds. These associations would have influenced how the event was perceived in the minds of both the perpetrators and those witnessing. In addition, witnessing the widespread destruction itself would have had consequences in its immediate aftermath – the early years of the reign of the successor. Actions taken by the successor shortly after the death of the condemned would have been viewed with this condemnation in mind, intensifying, or potentially undermining, the intended messages of these actions. For instance, Nerva's inscription of *aedes publicae* on the imperial palace would have perhaps seemed more genuinely democratic in context of the popular destruction of Domitian's autocratic gold and silver statues. This wide examination of the 'spectacle' in Rome will be the subject of the first chapter.<sup>172</sup>

It is also important to look deeper into this en masse spectacle, at the individual targets of this destruction. This 'targeted destruction' will be the topic of the second chapter of the first section. As each statue, for example, would have had particular messages during the lifetime of the tyrant, the statue's destruction would also have had particular consequences for their long-term reputation in the Roman cultural memory. Varner, again, touches on this in his 2008 article, pointing out that destruction or removal would be especially important in 'the

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<sup>171</sup> Varner (2004) p.8-9. See also Varner (2001a) p.60.

<sup>172</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 47.4.

case of insistently dramatic and artistically significant works', such as the statue of Commodus in the guise of Hercules in the Capitoline.<sup>173</sup> The memory figures formed by the destruction of particular statues would carry particular messages on the nature of tyranny and vice. This factor could be particularly important in the process of making the tyrant into a negative *exemplum* – the destruction of individual statues would focus the condemnation on individual elements of the tyrant's character, while the en masse spectacle would simply associate him with something negative and hated within the minds of the Roman people. What analysis has been made of the attacks on particular effigies has tended to use them purely as a means to reveal the motivations behind the attacks, rather than looking at how witnessing their destruction would change the collective perception of the condemned emperor.

The second section will cover the indirect, long-term, consequences of the condemnation. Much of the material for which the tyrant was ultimately responsible, or which had been conceived to promote his image, survived the initial destructive wave which followed the condemnation of his memory. As mentioned earlier, Davies has established that public building works were, for the most part, immune to it.<sup>174</sup> Some statues were almost always preserved, at least to some degree. The 'thoroughness' of *damnatio memoriae* varied from instance to instance, and so some portraits could be preserved simply through negligence, or the efforts of the condemned emperor's partisans in protecting them from damage. For those statues that were attacked the pedestals often remained, as in the case of the *Equus Domitiani*, maintaining the physical presence of the statue itself, and serving as an embodiment of the memories of the statue that once stood there. Inscriptions were, very clearly, not always completely removed or replaced. If they were not recarved, a viewer might have interpreted the conspicuous absence of, for instance, a specific dedicator for a temple as evidence of an earlier *damnatio*. There were often attempts to recall or disfigure coins which bore the image of the condemned, but the nature of coinage circulation meant that this was impossible to do thoroughly. This ensured that the image of the tyrant, as he had intended to be seen, remained visible to citizens of subsequent generations, and he continued to be juxtaposed and associated with the images which he chose to be depicted on the reverse.

The two most major indirect effects are both ways in which these remnants were utilised by the tyrant's successors in order to further denigrate his predecessor's memory and support his own. The first chapter of this section, the third in this thesis, is on the use of these remnants to contrast with the reigning emperor. As has been stated, the tyrant's negative identity would be used as a foil for successive regimes. As these remnants in the city became

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<sup>173</sup> Varner (2008) p.134.

<sup>174</sup> Davies (2000a).

embodiments of the condemned's negative identity, the successors could establish themselves as its antithesis via juxtaposition. This could either be literal juxtaposition, in that the successor builds something or does something significant in or near a place associated with his predecessor, or thematic, as the successor deliberately takes the opposite approach to a particular category of public work as his predecessor. This effect could also be somewhat exponential, as this contrast between the virtuous successor and the condemned tyrant would act to further denigrate the latter.

The second indirect effect, and the second chapter of this section, concerns the appropriation of these remnants by successive regimes. This will be focusing on the appropriation of buildings originally built by tyrants by successor emperors, long after the former's death and condemnation. This sort of appropriation could be considered a partial revival of the condemned's positive identity as part of a successor's; the appropriation of the tyrant's attempt to be remembered as a positive *exemplum*.<sup>175</sup> One should be careful not to mistake this as a partial rehabilitation of the tyrant, however – this process disowns the tyrant of these positive aspects of his former identity. Lastly, we will see how all aspects of *damnatio* and the manipulation of a tyrant's memory coalesced in the case study of the *Colossus Neronis*. This single monument's long history demonstrates well how this practice interacted with the material legacy of tyrants from the moment of their condemnation to the end of the culture that wishes to denigrate them.

The permanent and irreversible reinvention of the condemned emperor's character as a negative *exemplum* required more than the condemnation of his character in general via the removal of his material presence in the city of Rome. A close understanding of the consequences of witnessing the acts of violent destruction was necessary, as well as a continued and long-term campaign to use what remained, either physically or in the collective memory, to denigrate him, incentivised by sharing the glory and virtue in the shadow of his condemnation.

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<sup>175</sup> (Aleida) Assmann & Short, discussing societal reconciliation after significant social trauma, stress the importance of integrating the narrative of the opposition into a unified post-traumatic cultural memory – 'the often oppositional generational and cultural memories also need to be respected, and/or adapted and/or contained.' – Assmann & Short (2014) p.4.



## SECTION 1: THE IMMEDIATE SPECTACLE OF *DAMNATIO*

### *MEMORIAE*

#### Chapter 1: The Spectacle of Destruction during the *damnationes* of Domitian and Commodus

The destruction of an identity

*Damnatio memoriae*, particularly the *damnatio memoriae* of emperors, could be viewed as the process by which the memory figure of the condemned – his desired self-image – was remade into that of a negative *exemplum*. Before an identity is reinvented, however, the testaments to its original version must be utterly destroyed, and the tyrant's monuments must be removed from the physical landscape of Rome. This erasure of the original identity is the first phase of this reinvention of the tyrant's identity.<sup>176</sup> This would have then allowed the successor to derive prestige by contrast, and claim the role of 'liberator' from the reign of an oppressive tyrant. The very act of this removal is also incredibly important to the second phase, the development of the replacement negative identity. This destructive act, due to the importance of posthumous memory to the Roman mind, was highly derogatory in itself. The fact that tens of thousands of citizens in Rome would have either witnessed or took part in it would have generated collective discourse on this denigration, entering the collective condemnation of the tyrant into the social memory, a prerequisite for the creation of the memory figure of the tyrant as a negative *exemplum* of tyranny. A thorough understanding of the nuances of the 'spectacle' of *damnatio memoriae*, the acts of destruction themselves, is necessary to understanding how *damnatio* reinvented the identity of its targets.

However, in order for something to enter into the social memory of a people, they need to have a reason to remember it, something much more tangible than the eventual recreation of an identity. Much like the attempts to memorialise individuals with the aim to create positive *exempla*, condemning the memory of an individual can also have much more direct effects on perceptions of morality and political opinions. This element – the immediate political consequences of the destruction brought about by *damnatio memoriae* – is briefly explored by Varner.<sup>177</sup>

'But alteration of the visual landscape of imperial portraits could also be read in alternative ways by different audiences. *Damnationes* which were avidly

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<sup>176</sup> Stewart (1999) p.245 touches upon this.

<sup>177</sup> Varner (2004) p.8-9. See also Varner (2001a) p.60, and Varner (2012) p.139.

pursued or desired by the senate such as those of Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus or Elagabalus, served to reaffirm the senate's power and prestige for the senatorial aristocrats themselves and for society at large. Similarly, for the new emperor, his family, and supporters, the mutilation and transformation of a predecessor's images made tangible the authority of the new regime. For the partisans of the overthrown emperor, the destruction of portraits stand obviously as negative *exempla*.'

Varner hits on an extremely significant point here. The spectacle and the act of the destruction itself has varied and far-reaching consequences for Roman politics, both acting to affirm the power of those that carried out the destruction, and diminish the power of their enemies. Kousser also makes reference to the significance of the reception of this 'symbolic violence', and how the Romans witnessed it in action in newly-conquered territories in the Hellenistic world.<sup>178</sup> In imperial Rome, this effect would also be exponential, as the visibly weakening power of the condemned's supporters would increase that of his enemies.

The most significant discussion of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* can be found in Stewart's 2003 analysis of Roman 'iconoclasm'.<sup>179</sup> Stewart theorises at length on the mechanics of the destruction of statues, discussing the psychology of the crowd and the participants, and to what extent the event was 'spontaneous'. He comments on the potential immediate political consequences of what individuals witnessed, and the interpretations individuals could have of the methods by which certain statues were destroyed. Stewart's work is therefore invaluable, and provides the foundation for the discussion of this event. However, his approach, of attempting to summarise iconoclasm throughout the Roman period, prevents him from making more specific observations, such as how the characters of the individual tyrants could affect the interpretations of the spectacle, and how these interpretations could reinvent these characters into something negative. It also prevents him from saying much about the mechanics of the spectacle, as different instances of *damnatio memoriae* functioned in different ways. It is thus surprising that no-one has built on Stewart's work in this field in discussions of the *damnationes* of specific emperors. So, whilst Stewart's treatment of the spectacle is certainly important, it is not exhaustive.

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<sup>178</sup> Kousser (2015) p.37-40. Kousser discusses the conquest of the Hellenistic world by the Romans, and how this conquest resulted in political instability and the breakup of alliances. This in turn led to attacks of the images of Greek leaders, which the Romans witnessed and occasionally participated in. 'In this way', she says 'the Romans enhanced their understanding of the powerful real-world effects of such symbolic violence; they also saw first-hand how this violence served to affect, if not transform, collective memory.

<sup>179</sup> Stewart (2003) p.267-295. See also Stewart (1999) p.161-9.

I would argue that the condemnation of Domitian is the ideal case study for an initial exploration of these ideas. The memory sanctions against Domitian comprised the first *damnatio memoriae* against an emperor that was explicitly ordered by the senate – his material legacy was the first to be officially proscribed by them.<sup>180</sup> This is not to imply that Domitian was the first emperor to be denounced by the senate, an act that effectively endorsed *damnatio memoriae*. As Varner points out, Nero is among those officially condemned as an enemy of the state, *hostis*, by the senate.<sup>181</sup> However, this condemnation did not explicitly endorse, encourage or order the destruction of his statues and inscriptions, as in *damnatio memoriae*, as they did for Domitian according to Suetonius, though erasure of his inscriptions and statues certainly occurred nevertheless.<sup>182</sup> In addition, Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* can be viewed as the archetype for subsequent *damnationes*. The earlier imperial 'damnationes', of the Julio-Claudian period or the Year of the Four Emperors, were more haphazard affairs, unaccompanied by official endorsement. It is with the fall of Domitian that the typical Roman Imperial *damnatio* began to take form, with widespread and thorough erasure or destruction of inscriptions and effigies.<sup>183</sup> Domitian's case is therefore not only singularly significant as the beginning of what is commonly thought of as the 'typical' Roman *damnatio*, but it is also unique in its period, and so is the only case covered by the reliable and extensive (comparatively speaking) sources for the first century.<sup>184</sup> In particular, the vivid description in Pliny the Younger's panegyric of Trajan, discussed in more detail later, gives us a unique insight into the spectacle of destruction that followed Domitian's official condemnation by the senate.<sup>185</sup>

However, the use of just one case study, as discussed in the introduction, prevents us from fully understanding the phenomenon, as the nature of our discipline necessarily prevents us from having all the perfect evidence for one instance. In addition, presuming that Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*, or any individual instance of any phenomenon, is representative creates the risk of presuming that every *damnatio memoriae* took place in the same way. In fact, the circumstances surrounding the death of each tyrant, the contemporary reputation of the tyrant, and the extent to which *damnatio* had been formalised, would each

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<sup>180</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 23.1, (Index 4); Rollin (1979) p.165-66; Benoist (2004) p.176; Flower (2006) p.280; Varner (2008) p.143.

<sup>181</sup> Pailler & Sablayrolles (1994) p.13-14; Varner (2004) p.6; Suet. *Nero* 49.2. There was no official condemnation of Caligula or Vitellius, but spontaneous destruction of their monuments was allowed to occur by Claudius and Vespasian respectively – Suet. *Claud.* 11.3; Dio 59.30.1, 60.4.5-6, 64.2.1; Rollin (1979) p.165; Pekáry (1985) p.137; Højte (2005) p.56; Pollini (2006) p.592.

<sup>182</sup> Suet. *Nero* 49.2; Varner (2004) p.49-51; Flower (2006) p.212-223. For more on the transformation of the memory of Nero, see Chapter 3.

<sup>183</sup> Varner (2004) p.132, 135; Flower (2006) p.234-235, 262; Cooley (2012) p.317-318.

<sup>184</sup> Benoist (2004) p.176.

<sup>185</sup> Pailler & Sablayrolles (1994) p.11.

have influenced both the functioning of the spectacle, and how it was interpreted. Therefore, a second case study will be used as comparandum for the entirety of this section – the *damnatio memoriae* of Commodus. The sources discussing Commodus' death, and its immediate aftermath, are also uniquely significant, though certainly in different ways to those discussing that of Domitian. While the treatment of the destruction itself is very brief, the rhetoric of the senate in the acclamations made against Commodus on the day of Pertinax's accession is enormously valuable in helping us understand the motivations behind the destruction, and the intended interpretations of the violence against the portrait statues of Commodus. Additionally, while the archaeological evidence for the destruction of the portrait statues of Domitian from Rome is comparatively lacklustre, evidence relating to Commodus much more directly demonstrates the deliberate mutilation of statues, and the extent of the destruction. Additionally, Commodus' comparatively little building work in the city means that the survival of his memory was much more reliant on these portrait statues as compared to Domitian, providing an important point of comparison to Domitian's unusually prolific building programme.

In this section of the thesis, I will be focusing on the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* and its effects on the memory of the condemned tyrant. The spectacle and violence of *damnatio memoriae* is certainly a seriously underdeveloped area of research, especially considering the important role that the different elements of the event played in the denial and reconstruction of the condemned's memory. I will begin this chapter by contextualising the event, both within its time period, and within the existing scholarship on *damnatio memoriae*. The contribution of Varner and Flower's foundational works, especially with regard to the immediate aftermath of *damnatio memoriae* will be discussed first. After this, there are two main elements of the destructive spectacle which I will cover. The first chapter will be concerned with the impact of the spectacle *en masse*, including parallels with popular violence and witnessing violence in the arena. The power of this spectacle to invigorate the otherwise indifferent populace to take part in the denigration of the tyrant, and to intimidate the tyrant's supporters, will be discussed. The second chapter will discuss the consequences of the destruction, and the witnessing of this destruction, of particularly significant statues. The act of mutilation or destruction of a statue represents a very emotional condemnation of what that statue represents. This is apparent not only in a general sense, that of the individual represented, but also in the parts of the personality of the individual (or his achievements) which a statue seeks to promote. This is, of course, enormously significant for the creation of a new negative identity. This idea will be explored chiefly through two case studies – the statue of Domitian with Jupiter in the temple of Jupiter Custos, and the well-known *Equus Domitiani*. First, however, a survey of the events leading up to and following Domitian's assassination is

necessary. In order to theorise on the reactions of those involved and those witnessing the destruction of Domitian's effigies, it is necessary to understand the potential motives and preconceptions which they held.

The assassination of Domitian on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 96 should not have been too surprising, considering the number of powerful enemies he had accrued in the course of his reign, the most significant of these being the senate, and his staff.<sup>186</sup> However, his relationship with other groups, such as the army, was positive, and we certainly cannot be confident in assessing the opinion of the people. His relationship with the senate was famously poor, and not without good reason. He had ordered the execution of at least eleven senators of consular rank, and, according to Dio, had repeatedly ignored pleas that an emperor should not execute anyone of his *de jure* senatorial rank.<sup>187</sup> He had also, according to Jones, accelerated the senate's slow loss of real power, a process that had been ongoing throughout the first century.<sup>188</sup> The pro-senatorial accounts of his reign, and the *Panegyricus* all paint a picture of an emperor who also struggled with maintaining financial stability.<sup>189</sup> The veracity of this 'financial crisis' is often debated, and a summary of the arguments is provided by Rogers.<sup>190</sup> Regardless, this claim demonstrates the contempt many of them had for his capabilities as a ruler.<sup>191</sup> What may be surprising, however, is that the direct cause of his death was, according to the most reliable primary sources, a palace plot – a result of Domitian's mistreatment of his courtiers.<sup>192</sup> The senators, however, certainly wasted no time in condemning him officially after his death, and immediately replaced him with someone firmly entrenched in the senatorial ranks – Nerva.<sup>193</sup> However, the senate did not represent the will of all Romans, and not all senators were opposed to Domitian. After all, a *senatus consultum* only required a simple majority of senators to agree with it to pass, and Suetonius does not claim that the decision was unanimous.<sup>194</sup> A number of these senators had gained political prestige and authority under Domitian's sponsorship, and could have harboured positive feelings towards him as a result.<sup>195</sup> There were other parties in play at Rome as well. The army, for instance, is

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<sup>186</sup> Southern (1997) p.115-118.

<sup>187</sup> Dio 67.2.4; Pleket (1961); Jones, B. (1992) p.160, 180.

<sup>188</sup> Jones, B. (1992) p.169.

<sup>189</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 36-43, 50-51; Suet. *Dom.* 3.2, 12; Plut. *Vit. Pub.* 15.5; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.101-2, 108-9, 257-8.

<sup>190</sup> Rogers (1984); Charles (2002) p.24-5.

<sup>191</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 3.2; Garzetti (1974) p.302-303; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.101-2, 108-9, 257-8.

<sup>192</sup> Dio 67.15-18; Suet. *Dom.* 17; Jones, B. (1992) p.193-6. C.f. Grainger who argues for the involvement of senators, including Nerva, in the palace conspiracy – Grainger (2003) p.4-27.

<sup>193</sup> Jones, B. (1992) p.160, 193; Grainger (2003) p.5-7, 28-44. 45.

<sup>194</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 31.1, quoted below.

<sup>195</sup> For instance, Pliny the younger and Julius Proculus, both discussed later. It stands to reason that the many others, who had been awarded consulships and other high offices under Domitian, would be less interested in his destruction.

well known to have been in full support of Domitian at the time of his death, and the soldiers are said by Suetonius to have demanded his deification and plotted to avenge him in the immediate aftermath.<sup>196</sup> Their continued loyalty to him is perhaps best demonstrated by the revolt of the Praetorian Guard in 97, in which the guard succeeded in forcing Nerva to hand over two of those implicated in the conspiracy against Domitian.<sup>197</sup> The opinion of the population at large is hard to discern,<sup>198</sup> but a range of opinions is inevitable within such a large group. If no-one else, people personally connected to the imperial family – imperial freedmen, imperial slaves and those among his courtiers who were particularly favoured, for example – would have not been as ready to celebrate Domitian's demise as the majority of the senate was. Nerva's position on the day of his accession was thus anything but secure, and he would no doubt be aware that he was surrounded by partisans of the overthrown emperor. The political motivation for a *damnatio memoriae*, and the reinvention of Domitian's identity, was clear.

Commodus died in similar circumstances. After blocking a number of unsuccessful assassination attempts, from various groups including members of his own family, Commodus was strangled by his wrestling partner Narcissus, who had apparently, according to Herodian, been paid to do so by Laetus, the praetorian prefect, and Eclectus, Commodus' *cubicularius*.<sup>199</sup> Commodus' megalomania, we are told, drew the ire of not only the senate, but the populace at large and high ranking members of the military – the fact that the praetorian prefect was involved in his assassination demonstrates the lack of loyalty the military felt towards him.<sup>200</sup> This is a significant difference between Domitian and Commodus – it seems that the latter had very few supporters by comparison, at least in the immediate aftermath of his death. Perhaps this is reflected in Pertinax's apparent lack of enthusiasm to condemn Commodus utterly – Pertinax did not think it was necessary to consolidate his position, and wished to prevent himself being disassociated with the otherwise divine Antonine dynasty.<sup>201</sup> Nevertheless, Commodus would certainly have had a few supporters within the senate – those whom he had provided with high-ranking positions or wealth, as was the case with Domitian. In addition, there will be many who, wishing to gain the emperor's favour, will have put on the appearance of support, via displaying his portrait image.

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<sup>196</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 23.1 (Index 4); Jones, B. (1992) p.142-3.

<sup>197</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 6.1; Dio 68.2-3; Eutropius *Brev.* 8.1.1-2; Flower (2001) p.643-4; Grainger (2003) p.94-96.

<sup>198</sup> Grainger (2003) p.45-47.

<sup>199</sup> Herodian 1.17.7-11; Dio 73.22.4-5; SHA *Comm.* 17.1-2.

<sup>200</sup> Toner (2014) p.31; Calomino (2016) p.103-4.

<sup>201</sup> For instance, Pertinax buried Commodus in the Mausoleum of Hadrian.

## The spectacle in literature

As has been mentioned before, the *damnatio memoriae* which affected Domitian was exceptional in the first century in its official sanction, and the sources we have for the event of the *damnatio* are also exceptional, as is recognised by existing scholarship. The first of these sources, the final passage of the biography of Domitian in Suetonius, is short, but significant (Index 4).<sup>202</sup> Suetonius describes the senators themselves directly orchestrating the destruction of Domitian's images in the *curia*, immediately before voting that his memory be condemned. Given that his account was published in the reign of Hadrian in 121, less than twenty years after the death of Domitian, when Suetonius was employed as Hadrian's personal secretary, Suetonius certainly has an interest in telling a story which denigrates Domitian and praises the founder of the dynasty of which his patron is a member.<sup>203</sup> However, Suetonius is not afraid of speaking against Nerva – Suetonius readily passes on the rumour Domitian had been violated (*corruptum*) by Nerva in the former's youth.<sup>204</sup> In addition, he was contemporary to the events that he described, and while we do not know whether he witnessed first-hand the destruction that the senators wrought on Domitian's symbols in the *curia*,<sup>205</sup> it is likely that his sources for it would be more reliable, as they were separated from the events in question by a relatively short time.<sup>206</sup> In addition, many of those who had witnessed the events would still be alive to contradict Suetonius if he had misconstrued the reality of what happened.

I see no reason to dismiss this passage, therefore, purely on the basis of its political usefulness to Hadrian – the only doubt that could feasibly be introduced is from the tendency of Suetonius to highlight scandalous events and rumours.<sup>207</sup> He mainly does this in order to outline the qualities of various emperors as either virtuous or vicious, as Wallace-Hadrill outlines, and he does so in sections that are separated from the main narrative of each individual biography.<sup>208</sup> Suetonius does not appear to exaggerate with the aim of demonstrating senatorial virtue, or supporting the narrative of the current regime.<sup>209</sup> As Wallace-Hadrill suggests, Suetonius works contrary to the style of the typical ancient historian, who sought to 'excite emulation of his heroes and disgust for his villains'.<sup>210</sup> Contrary to his reputation as a sensationalist, furthermore, he was more willing than his contemporaries to

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<sup>202</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 23.1 (Index 4).

<sup>203</sup> SHA *Hadr.* 11.3.

<sup>204</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 1.1.

<sup>205</sup> We do know he lived in Rome at this time, and he claimed to be an eyewitness to Domitian's court on one occasion – Suet. *Dom.* 12.2; Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.4-5; Mellor (1999) p.146-7.

<sup>206</sup> Graves (1957) p.7.

<sup>207</sup> Mehl (2011) p.167-8.

<sup>208</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.143, 23-4. This is particularly true for vices of pleasure, and so is most clear in the biographies of Tiberius, Caligula and Nero – Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.173-4.

<sup>209</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.18-19.

<sup>210</sup> Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.19; Mellor (1999) p.148.

reference his sources directly, and has a relatively rigorous scholarly methodology of weighing up the contrary evidence before reaching a conclusion, as can be seen in his life of Vespasian.<sup>211</sup> When compared to Suetonius' treatment of Nero or Caligula, his account of Domitian could almost be taken as neutral – he states that Domitian's virtues and vices were balanced for a long period, and that the reaction to his death was mixed, with the army lamenting his death and the senate celebrating it.<sup>212</sup> It would make no sense for Suetonius to deliberately misrepresent the events following Domitian's death, as Suetonius has no motivation to unfairly vilify him, for either political, personal, or ideological reasons.

Additionally, an extraordinary passage in Pliny the Younger's panegyric of Trajan goes into great detail on the spectacle of the destruction of Domitian's images (Index 5).<sup>213</sup> A number of scholars have recognised the notability of this passage with regards to what happens during *damnatio*.<sup>214</sup> However, owing to a lack of recognition of the importance of the spectacle as a whole, it has not received the attention it deserves. The assumptions made by Pliny in this passage regarding the relationship between an image and the image's referent, especially with regards to attacks on those images, demonstrate the potential emotive hooks of the experience of witnessing or taking part in their destruction. In addition, the description of certain details of the spectacle, such as the recycling of Domitian's metal statues, provides valuable insight into how the acts of destruction would be received by the populace at large.<sup>215</sup> These details will be used in the course of this chapter to demonstrate the presence and emotive reception of particular elements of the *damnatio* spectacle. As such, it is worth assessing the work for its reliability.

Pliny's *Panegyricus* is, of course, by its very nature, biased. In this passage, he is praising Trajan by contrast, comparing Domitian's numerous statues of silver and gold on the Capitoline to Trajan's few, and saying that Trajan's will last for much longer thanks to their modesty and his virtue.<sup>216</sup> However, it would be wrong to dismiss the validity of this passage on that basis alone. As Radice, Morford and Syme agree, the *Panegyricus* should not be received as 'idle flattery', but rather as Pliny setting out the senate's ideal constitutional

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<sup>211</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 16-19 – Suetonius introduces a problem wherein there is a debate on the causes of Vespasian's financial rapacity; whether it was caused by an inherent covetousness or it was necessary to support the treasury. He presents his opinion that it was the latter, and presents evidence to support his public beneficence - see Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.14-15, 19-22. See also Mellor (1999) p.149, 152-3, 155-7.

<sup>212</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 3.2, 23.1; Wallace-Hadrill (1983) p.149.

<sup>213</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 52.3-7 (Index 5).

<sup>214</sup> Vittinghof (1936) p.13-4; Pekáry (1985) p.134; Claus (1999) p.385; Varner (2004) p.2-3; Vout (2008) p.255; Omissi (2016) p.174.

<sup>215</sup> The implications of this recycling are discussed in the following section – below, p.136.

<sup>216</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 52.3-4 (Index 5); Roche (2011) p.53.



ruler.<sup>217</sup> The *Panegyricus* should thus not be interpreted as purely propaganda, unconcerned with the truth – there is significant debate over whether the term propaganda can even be applied to it accurately, since this would imply that it is state sponsored.<sup>218</sup> Reconsidering the text in this way could still leave in doubt the reliability of Pliny’s account, however. There is still motivation to exaggerate in order to give Trajan a warning concerning the dangers of allowing oneself to fall into tyranny, but absolute invention seems less likely if Trajan is the intended audience. Trajan would certainly have had access to many contradictory accounts, and learning of these would severely lessen the emotional impact of the passage.<sup>219</sup>

In addition, the *Panegyricus* (and the panegyric genre as a whole) has proven itself to be a worthwhile historical source, at least when it comes to incidental details and biographical information.<sup>220</sup> With regards to this particular event, we can afford Pliny some extra credibility on account of his presence in the city at the time of Domitian’s assassination and subsequent official condemnation – Pliny was acting as the *praefectus aerarii militaris* at the time.<sup>221</sup> Furthermore, it is plausible that Pliny himself participated in the *damnatio memoriae* against Domitian in order to align himself immediately with the new regime. Freudenberg calls attention to a letter of Pliny, in which Pliny says that after the death of Domitian, he ‘decided on reflection that this was a truly splendid opportunity for attacking the guilty, avenging the injured, and making oneself known’ (*statui mecum ac deliberavi, esse magnam pulchramque materiam insectandi nocentes, miseros vindicandi, se proferendi*).<sup>222</sup> The opportunism which Pliny demonstrates here shows a desire to take advantage of any chance to declare himself as an enemy of Domitian. This would be especially important for Pliny, whose political career was certainly advanced by the condemned tyrant.<sup>223</sup>

Varner rightly calls attention to this as being a particularly valuable and exceptional passage.<sup>224</sup> The language Pliny uses to describe the attacks on Domitian’s statues excellently demonstrates one aspect of the emotional reaction to attacks on statues. In the Roman mind, statues were often treated not only as a depiction of an individual, but often as a

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<sup>217</sup> Syme (1938) p.223; Morford (2012) p.128; Radice (2012) p.80.

<sup>218</sup> Rees (2012) p.40-41. Whether the *Panegyricus* can be truly considered ‘propaganda’ is a topic of serious debate amongst scholars of imperial panegyric – there are a number of examples of grievances being articulated through this medium, and we cannot assume that all positive messages about Trajan’s regime were predetermined by the regime itself.

<sup>219</sup> Such as the lost final books of Tacitus’ *Histories*. The nature of the *Panegyricus* as something to be read in public would also have meant it was heard by the other senators, who could have contradicted Pliny’s account if they saw fit.

<sup>220</sup> Rees (2012) p.35-36.

<sup>221</sup> *CIL* V 5262.

<sup>222</sup> Freudenberg (2001) p.232-233; Pliny *Ep.* 9.13.2

<sup>223</sup> Paillet & Sablayrolles (1994) p.25; Freudenberg (2001) p.228-230.

<sup>224</sup> Varner (2001a) p.47; Varner (2004) p.113; Varner (2012) p.122. See also Paillet & Sablayrolles (1994) p.15.

manifestation of them. There are a number of thorough demonstrations of this already published, notably by Gordon with regard to cult statues, and Huet with regards to the importance of this principle to *damnatio memoriae*, which I will not attempt to summarise here.<sup>225</sup> This was particularly true for gods, and for important figures, such as emperors, who needed to be present for more events or ceremonies than was physically possible.<sup>226</sup> A demonstration of this veneration of statues as avatars of gods or emperors from our period can be seen in a story told by Dio, in which a woman is put to death for undressing in front of an image of Domitian.<sup>227</sup> Thus, those destroying or witnessing the destruction of the statues of Domitian would have been conditioned, to some extent, to interpret such an act as a direct attack on Domitian himself. Those participating in their destruction may have emotionally reacted as if they were actually participating in the mutilation of his corpse by proxy, or perhaps even the abuse of an avatar of a living Domitian.<sup>228</sup> Pliny the younger, when he describes the blows that people made against the statue as being enthusiastic ‘as if blood and agony could follow from every blow’ (*ut si singulos ictus sanguis dolorque sequeretur*), accurately represents the connection between body and effigy which was present in the minds of the participants which he is describing.<sup>229</sup> The particular words he uses to highlight this relationship are very important. His use of ‘*ut si...sequeretur*’ does not necessarily imply that the destruction was recognised as a literal murder (‘as if it would follow’), but rather as a hope which motivates the participants (‘as if it could follow’). In some ways this is more significant. Not only is a recognition that a statue would not in reality react to attacks in the same way a body would much more understandable and relatable, but the expression of the connection between body and effigy as a desire gives the sequence a much more potent emotional energy. They are aware that there is not a literal connection between the body of Domitian and his statues, but how they wish there was!

In this way, Pliny spells out the emotional reaction and emotional motivation for the mutilation and destruction of statues of a condemned emperor. To some extent, this parallels

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<sup>225</sup> See Gordon (1979); Elsner (1996), especially p.525; Gregory (1994) p.85-88, 96-7; Hekster (2002) p.113; Elsner (2003) p.226; Pollini (2006) p.590-1; Huet (2008); Varner (2012) p.122; Perry (2015) p.661; Trimble (2015) p.618; Kellum (2015) p.254. Kyle discusses the direct connection between the calls for post-mortem corpse abuse of Commodus and *damnatio memoriae*, showing that the two were closely connected – Kyle (1998) p.225-226 – see below, p.81-2.

<sup>226</sup> Walker (1995) p.16.

<sup>227</sup> Dio 67.12.2. This is also very clearly visible in other periods – Vout uses the example of Tiberius enforcing *maiestas* laws regarding statues of Augustus, initially reacting to a man removing the head of a statue of Augustus, then escalating to making changing clothes near a statue a capital crime – Suet. *Tib.* 58.1; Vout (2008) p.155. See also Pekáry (1985) p.139-141 for punishment for attacks on imperial portraits, and below, p.72.

<sup>228</sup> Huet (2004) p.23; Carroll (2011) p.73; Petersen (2011) p.6.

<sup>229</sup> Clauss (1999) p.385; Stewart (1999) p.254; Varner (2001a); Varner (2004) p.113, 135; Carroll (2011) p.86-7; Varner (2012) p.122.

Suetonius' account. Suetonius' emphasis on the senators having Domitian's images 'hurled down before their eyes and dashed to the ground' (*imagines eius coram detrahi et ibidem solo affligi iuberet*) demonstrates the recognised emotional power of this destruction.<sup>230</sup> This is even clearer in context, as it occurs immediately after the senate hurls insults at the deceased emperor. The direct connection between a desire to degrade posthumously and punish Domitian, the man, and orchestrate the destruction of his effigies in such a way that they make sure that they witness it, demonstrates the cathartic power of this murder-by-proxy.

Additionally, one of the main purposes of portrait statues, as a component of the material embodiment of *memoria*, was to 'defy' death by preserving one's likeness - the destruction of one's statues would deny that, and be interpreted as a posthumous death, as mentioned in the introduction.<sup>231</sup> This is an element particularly important to Domitian, whose divine pretensions were widely criticised by his contemporaries, and as such formed a large part of his posthumous infamy. Clauss argues that the above passage of Pliny further denigrates Domitian by describing him as mortal, thereby denying his self-professed divinity.<sup>232</sup> If the description of this event could be interpreted in this way, the event itself may have roused the same sorts of emotions and desires to obliterate Domitian's memory and, by extension, the man himself. The archaeological evidence for the mutilation of statues, being of particular importance to the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, will be discussed below.

These two accounts, however, are not the only passages that demonstrate a powerful emotional reaction to Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*. A passage of Plutarch's *Moralia* gives the impression that the *Dionysia* at Athens was celebrated with particular magnificence, after news of the death of Domitian arrived.<sup>233</sup> This is despite Athens benefiting considerably from Domitian's benefactions, perhaps revealing the extent of his unpopularity, and gives further evidence for the celebratory atmosphere highlighted by Suetonius and Pliny.<sup>234</sup> Additionally, a section in Juvenal's *Satires* is extremely revealing in terms of how *damnatio* was popularly imagined in his time – when he describes the spectacle of the *damnatio memoriae* of Sejanus in *Satire 10* (Index 6).<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> It could be argued that the emotional effect of this appears to be dampened by the juxtaposition of the reaction of the senate with the assessment of the ordinary people's reaction to Domitian's death 'with indifference' (*indifferenter*). However, it is more likely that this comment is either a reference to the reaction of the people upon his death, before his condemnation (discussed below, p.71), or an assessment of the people's true emotional attachment to this condemnation (discussed below, p.60).

<sup>231</sup> Gordon (1979) p.26; Walker (1995) p.16. See above, p.16.

<sup>232</sup> Clauss (1999) p.385.

<sup>233</sup> Plut. *Moralia*. 828; Grainger (2003) p.47-48; Jones, C.P. (1971) p.27.

<sup>234</sup> Jones, C.P. (1971) p.27 (See Index 4 & 5).

<sup>235</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 10.65-74.

Although he is discussing Sejanus, Juvenal's description would certainly have had contemporary resonance, potentially making reference to the scenes during Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*. In the existing scholarship, this idea has mostly either been taken for granted or ignored entirely. Highet's 1954 commentary, for instance, simply states that Juvenal was 'clearly thinking of Domitian', and Courtney in 1980 alludes to this view by saying that 'Juvenal will have seen such scenes after the death of Domitian'.<sup>236</sup> Keane's brief 2015 treatment is the most direct reference to this idea in recent years, and she is still hesitant to name the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian as being the direct inspiration:

'It is particularly significant that the story of Sejanus's spectacular fall heads up Juvenal's catalog: a reader might get the impression that the sermon from here on will concern itself with Roman examples, including the raw, the recent, and the political. One familiar with imperial-era "doublespeak" might even read Sejanus as an exportable cipher functioning in a more contemporary story.'<sup>237</sup>

In a footnote to this sentence, Keane attributes a view to Freudenberg, *per litteras*, that the equestrian statues of Sejanus made the subject of this section of *Satire* 10 are a direct reference to the *Equus Domitiani* as described in the first poem of Statius' *Silvae*.<sup>238</sup> While I might be reticent to call it a direct reference to the destruction of a particular statue, it is likely that Juvenal intended to make reference to the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian in this passage, or, at least, was inspired by the event in writing. Juvenal, born in AD 67, would have been twenty-nine at the time of Domitian's death, making it possible for him to have witnessed the *damnatio* spectacle first-hand, if he was in Rome at the time.<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, as the *Satires* were written during Trajan's reign, and the beginning of that of Hadrian, the event would not have passed out of the social memory of the city, meaning that Juvenal could rely on his readers understanding allusions to the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian.<sup>240</sup> Denigrating Domitian by making reference to his downfall is also in keeping with Juvenal's treatment of Domitian in general. Friedländer points out the more explicit examples of anti-Domitianic

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<sup>236</sup> Highet (1954) p.276-277; Courtney (1980) p.460.

<sup>237</sup> Keane (2015) p.131. Keane cites Bartsch (1994) p.92-93 for evidence of Juvenal using poetic 'doublespeak' – Juvenal references Tigellinus, a Neronian official, as a means to criticise Tigellinus' Domitianic equivalents.

<sup>238</sup> Keane (2015) p.131, n.30. See also Stewart (2003) p.274 on this passage – 'a generalised description, but applied in particular to Sejanus'.

<sup>239</sup> Hooley (2007) p.130.

<sup>240</sup> Uden (2015) p.1-2, 219-226 for the dating of Juvenal's satires.

sentiment within the satires, in particular within *Satire 4*, in which Domitian is ridiculed for, among other things, his military and literary pretensions.<sup>241</sup>

Even if Juvenal is neither inspired by, nor alludes to, the spectacle of Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*, the passage is still enormously important for understanding the reaction to such a spectacle in general. Juvenal clearly describes, and ridicules, the spectacle as being celebratory, mirroring Pliny's description of the event as being a joyous occasion, and people taking pleasure in seeing Domitian's images destroyed (*iuvabat, gaudio, gaudii seraque laetitiae, voluptates*). Juvenal also portrays the people as indifferent to the reason for the destruction, seeking even the lightest excuse to join in (*nil plus interrogo*), even if they had no pre-existing feelings against or in favour of the condemned victim.<sup>242</sup> He also emphasises those who are inclined to make a show of joining in the destruction in order to show their allegiance to the new regime, purely for reasons of self-preservation.<sup>243</sup> This recalls the letter of Pliny the Younger discussed earlier. Opportunism is similarly demonstrated here by those who were given the opportunity to join in the denigration of Domitian. This willingness for otherwise indifferent spectators to contribute to this emotionally charged destruction of Domitian's statues is enormously important, as will be discussed below. Juvenal then recalls the mob of republican Rome, lamenting the comparative lack of responsibility shown by the disenfranchised imperial Romans.<sup>244</sup> Additionally, he alludes to the fact that statues could act as stand-ins for the corpse or living body of the condemned; it is phrased as if it is Sejanus himself who is transformed into pots and pans, and not his statues.<sup>245</sup> Juvenal then describes the spectacle of Sejanus being dragged through the streets of Rome, but without specifying whether it is Sejanus himself or his statues, alluding to the ambiguity that existed between a man and his effigies.<sup>246</sup> This closely parallels, though less explicitly, Pliny's description of the destruction of Domitian's gold and silver statues, and the desire on the behalf of the participants for the images of Domitian to be hurt as he would be. The most significant difference between these two accounts of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, is that of tone. Where Pliny highlights the virtue of the participants, taking revenge for those murdered by Domitian, Juvenal is much more cynical, saying that participants had no genuine ideological reasoning behind their own deeds. The fact that both of these sources, one supportive and

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<sup>241</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 2.39, and 4; Friedländer (1969) p.34; Hooley (2007) p.113-14.

<sup>242</sup> See Freudenberg (2001) p.12. This aligns well with Suetonius' account, who says that the people 'were indifferent to his death' (*occisum eum populus indifferenter*), followed by his account of the senators' official condemnation and destruction.

<sup>243</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 10.81-88 (Index 6).

<sup>244</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 10.77-81 (Index 6).

<sup>245</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 10.63-64 (Index 6). Dio 58.11.3, also discussing the fall of Sejanus, explicitly states that the public treated Sejanus' statues 'as if they were treating the man himself with disdain'.

<sup>246</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 10.65-70 (Index 6). Dio 58.11.5 describes Sejanus being thrown down the Gemonian steps and his body abused by the crowd. See above, p.57 n.213, 217.

one critical, draw attention to the joyful nature of the destruction is significant, as it demonstrates that criticism of the spectacle did not attempt to throw doubt on its joyful nature, but rather questioned the authenticity of that joy.

The literary evidence for Commodus' *damnatio memoriae* is less extensive than that of Domitian's, but intriguing nonetheless. Dio comments quite extensively on the public's reaction to Commodus' death, and to his burial by Pertinax in the mausoleum of Hadrian (Index 7).<sup>247</sup> Dio states that the terms that the people used to refer to Commodus changed, from Commodus or Emperor to calling him a 'wretch' (ἀλιτήριον) or a 'tyrant' (τύραννον), including more specific insults as well – 'gladiator' (μονομάχον), 'left-handed' (ἀρματηλάτην), 'ruptured' (κηλήτην).<sup>248</sup> These specific acclamations made by the crowd, and the direct link that Dio draws between them and the previous respectful terms that had been used for Commodus, demonstrates the potential for *damnatio memoriae* to immediately reinvent the identity of the condemned into something negative, as well as the Roman recognition of this potential.<sup>249</sup> This, as Dio states, is a result of the people being emboldened by the demonstrative change in leadership, that they had removed a leader and had nothing to fear from his successor.<sup>250</sup> This is enormously important for understanding the reception of the spectacle among the people – as discussed in detail below. On the mechanics of the *damnatio memoriae* he simply states:

ἡθέλησαν μὲν γὰρ καὶ τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ σῦραι καὶ διασπάσαι ὥσπερ καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας

'They wanted to drag off his body and tear it from limb to limb, as they did do, in fact, with his statues'<sup>251</sup>

This evokes, though in brief, Pliny's comments on the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian, and directly demonstrates that the perception of *damnatio* as a proxy for attacks on the body is common throughout the phenomenon's history. The fact that it precedes the comments on the acclamations of the crowd, and his specific comments on the crowd being emboldened by the visible change in leadership,<sup>252</sup> also suggests that it was the destruction of Commodus' statues that initiated this widespread condemnation.

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<sup>247</sup> Dio 74.2.1-3 (Index 7).

<sup>248</sup> Dio 74.2.1 (Index 7); Hekster (2002) p.161; Aldrete (1999) p.131.

<sup>249</sup> Aldrete points out that these acclamations and those in the account of the *Historia Augusta* are very close to the form and structure of the standard complimentary acclamations, comparing SHA *Sev. Alex.* 6.3 to SHA *Comm.* 18.5 – Aldrete (1999) p.131-3.

<sup>250</sup> Dio 74.2.1 (Index 7).

<sup>251</sup> Dio 74.2.1 (Index 7).

<sup>252</sup> 'For now that they had got rid of one ruler and as yet had nothing to fear from his successor, they were making the most of their freedom in the interval, and were gaining a reputation for boldness of speech in the security of the moment.' – Dio 74.2.2 (Index 7). See Osgood (2016) p.178-9.

Most significant, and most memorable, however, of the sources that discuss Commodus' *damnatio memoriae* is the *Historia Augusta*. The author retells at length the acclamations of the senate, claiming to quote Marius Maximus.<sup>253</sup> This passage is considered by Birley to be the exception to the absence of genuine sources in the *Historia Augusta*, and the references in Dio to these acclamations affirm their veracity.<sup>254</sup> While the importance of this passage as evidence for the functioning of *damnatio memoriae* has been touched on by Stewart, its length and specificity means that it deserves more attention than I am able to give it here. There are some important details that assist in revealing how *damnatio memoriae* functioned, on a practical level. The senate's decree calls repeatedly for Commodus to be dragged down (*detrahantur*), often by the hook (*unco trahatur*), naming him not only as Commodus, but in more specific derogatory terms, such as 'slayer of senators' (*carnifex senatus*) or 'he who plundered temples' (*qui templa spoliavit*).<sup>255</sup> This echoes Dio, and again reinforces the immediate recreation of the identity of Commodus as part of his *damnatio memoriae*. Commodus' statues, however, are mentioned specifically on a few occasions throughout the acclamations. Again, the senate calls for them to be dragged down (*detrahantur*), and the calls for these attacks on statues being intertwined with calls for attacks on the body of Commodus again draws attention to the use of portraits as proxies for the corpse of the condemned tyrant.<sup>256</sup> The fact that the decree emphasises the statues of Commodus, 'the gladiator', being 'everywhere' (*gladiatoris statuas undique*), as if acting as a call to action in itself, is also significant for understanding the spectacle – it does not necessarily matter which statues or where they are, they are all valid targets for your outrage.<sup>257</sup> The *Historia Augusta* later comments, in the life of Pertinax, that the Praetorian Guard were airing their grievances on 'the day after the Kalends of January, when the statues of Commodus were overthrown' (*postero kalendarum die cum statuae Commodi deicerentur*). The use of the *damnatio* event as a marking point for the timing of something else is significant in itself – that the statues being overthrown was a landmark event, and something that could be remembered.<sup>258</sup>

### The spectacle in the archaeological record

In addition to the richness of the surviving literary discussion of this event, Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* is also exceptional in its extent. Such a thorough and concerted effort to

<sup>253</sup> SHA *Comm.* 18-19; Huet (2004) p.238.

<sup>254</sup> Birley (1976) p.14; Bats (2003) p.282-4; Dio 74.2 (Index 7).

<sup>255</sup> SHA *Comm.* 18-19; Kyle (1998) p.225-226; Huet (2004) p.242.

<sup>256</sup> SHA *Comm.* 18.12-13; 19.1.

<sup>257</sup> SHA *Comm.* 18.12.

<sup>258</sup> SHA *Pertinax* 6.3. The unusual fact that this was said to take place on the second of January, when Commodus died on the evening of the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, will be discussed later.

eradicate an emperor's memory had not been seen before.<sup>259</sup> The difficulty of studying Domitian in material culture, as attested to by Flower, is testament to the success of the condemnation of his memory.<sup>260</sup> We can see a recognition of this even in our ancient sources. Procopius, discussing Domitian in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, tells us that there was nowhere in Rome from which his name was not erased.<sup>261</sup> While Procopius is likely exaggerating, considering the evidence for the survival of Domitian's name on many private inscriptions, this is something which is currently true for public monuments - the only exception being Domitian's name in hieroglyphs on the obelisk in the Piazza Navona.<sup>262</sup> Procopius also writes that Domitian's statues were universally eliminated, with one exception – a statue on the right-hand side of the *Clivus Capitolinus*, looking toward the Capitoline. Procopius states that it was made on the orders of Domitia, who had pieced together Domitian's sundered corpse to provide a model for the statue.<sup>263</sup> While this story is likely apocryphal, it nonetheless remains an apt metaphor for the memory of Domitian – something that needs to be cobbled together from disparate parts. The fact that Domitian's *damnatio* was recognised as exceptionally thorough by ancient sources, even several hundred years later, attests to the impact of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* to Rome's collective memory.

Domitian's extensive building programme further intensified the severity of his *damnatio* in Rome. Of all Roman emperors, Domitian was second only to Augustus in the number of works in Rome he completed or restored – and his building project was similarly transformative to the city.<sup>264</sup> The buildings themselves were, with the notable exception of his arches, immune to the destructive wave that fell upon Domitian's statues and inscriptions.<sup>265</sup> This is convincingly argued by Davies to be the result of Roman pragmatism rather than representing any ideological support for Domitian or his building programme.<sup>266</sup> However,

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<sup>259</sup> Levin (1985) p.285-7; Varner (2004) p.132, n.186. See above, p.49.

<sup>260</sup> Flower (2006) p.236.

<sup>261</sup> Procop. *Arc.* 8.14.

<sup>262</sup> Pailler & Sablayrolles (1994) p.15-16; Flower (2006) p.242; Hekster (2015) p.270. I would agree with Varner in saying that the only reason for this exception is a practical one; almost nobody in Rome could read hieroglyphs, and the workmen who would be in charge of removing large public inscriptions would most likely not have recognised Domitian's name in the cartouche regardless – Varner (2004) p.132, n.184. The lack of relevance and readability for the citizens of Rome thus makes it almost a non-entity, except as a curiosity for Egyptian visitors or immigrants, who could both have had a sufficient knowledge of Roman history to be aware of Domitian and the *damnatio memoriae* against him, and could read hieroglyphs.

<sup>263</sup> Procop. *Arc.* 14-20; Vout (2009) p.264-5.

<sup>264</sup> On the scale of Domitian's building programme, see Jones, B. (1992) p.79; Obermayer (1998) p.53 n.137; Davies (2000a) p.34; Fredrick (2003) p.201-202; Roche (2011) p.46, 48.

<sup>265</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 13.2; Dio 68.1.1; Pliny *Pan.* 1.54.4; Statius *Silv.* 4.1.39; Richardson (1992) p.25. Darwall Smith summarises the archaeological evidence – Darwall-Smith (1996) p.238-239.

<sup>266</sup> Davies (2000a) p.31-32, 34, 35-36, 42.



Domitian's name on his buildings did suffer erasure on a grand scale, as mentioned above.<sup>267</sup> The late Christian author Lactantius comments upon this irony – that an emperor who had gone to such extreme lengths to promote his name (even to the extent of excluding the name of the founder when he restored an existing structure, according to Suetonius) had been so thoroughly persecuted after his death that there remained 'no traces of the inscriptions put up in honour of him'.<sup>268</sup> If Domitian had attempted to claim ownership of the city by putting his name on it in so many places, then the widespread erasure of his name would be returning Rome to its people, as well as acting as a sort of 'poetic justice' for his overzealous self-promotion.<sup>269</sup> Most importantly, however, the fact that Domitian's name was so prominent on so many dedicatory inscriptions as a result of his extensive building work would have acted to further intensify the awe of the spectacle of their destruction.

The statistical evidence for this exceptional thoroughness is more debateable. Varner cites the fact that 40% of surviving inscriptions that are known to have contained Domitian's name underwent erasure.<sup>270</sup> It is important to consider, however, that this does not mean that 40%, or even a figure close to that, of total inscriptions which mention Domitian were mutilated following his *damnatio*. It should rather be read as 40% of those inscriptions on which Domitian's name is extant and recognisable, show evidence of deliberate erasure of his name. It is a figure which thus necessarily excludes those inscriptions that were destroyed or re-used.<sup>271</sup> Grainger makes an analysis of similarly problematic bases.<sup>272</sup> He also examines the proportion of inscriptions erased, but divides it into regions, coming to the conclusion that since only 9 out of 50 found in Rome had been erased, there was a significant amount of support or indifference there compared to other regions of the Empire.<sup>273</sup> This, however, could be explained equally well as inscriptions being more likely to have been completely destroyed, or so completely erased to have become unrecognisable, during the *damnatio*.<sup>274</sup> Roche is

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<sup>267</sup> Flower (2006) p.242. It is possible that, as on the *Fasti Ostienses*, Domitian's name could have survived in texts where it was impractical and confusing to erase it completely, but it would have survived only as '*Domitianus*', without any of his imperial names or titles – effectively derogatory - Flower (2006) p.249-252

<sup>268</sup> Lactant. *De mort. persec.* 3.3-5; Suet. *Dom.* 5.1.

<sup>269</sup> In terms of 'returning the city to the people', Nerva's inscription of *aedes publicae* on Domitian's Palatine palace could be taken as a representative example – Pliny *Pan.* 47.4; 51.2; Garzetti (1974) p.301.

<sup>270</sup> Varner (2004) p.132; D'Ambra (1993) p.7; Pailler & Sablayrolles (1994) p.14.

<sup>271</sup> Flower (2006) p.240; Keppie (1991) p.22.

<sup>272</sup> Grainger (2003) p.50-51.

<sup>273</sup> Grainger (2003) p.50-51. Note that none of the inscriptions that escaped erasure were displayed on a public monument of any significance – see above, p.63.

<sup>274</sup> 'We must imagine that some inscriptions were removed from public view....some inscriptions would have been simply destroyed' – Keppie (1991) p.22. Kristensen points out that not all methods of inscriptional *damnatio* are archaeologically visible, as can be seen with the placards that were affixed to statues of Nero that featured abusive inscriptions – Kristensen (2015) p.672; Suet. *Nero* 45.2.

correct in saying that this methodology is 'on show for a length disproportionate to its worth'.<sup>275</sup> Regardless, even if 'only' 40% of inscriptions from Rome were truly erased during Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* (which, as I hope to have established, is at best a minimum estimate), it is of little consequence, as we are concerned with the impact on the memories of those who witnessed the destruction. A figure of 40%, presuming that the most visible inscriptions were targeted first, is more than enough to make a lasting impact on the memory of the Roman people, as the Procopius and Lactantius passages demonstrate.

Perhaps the most emotive part of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, however, is the violent attack against the portrait statues of Domitian. While it is near impossible to determine whether the inscriptions mentioning Domitian's name were attacked spontaneously by the people reacting to the call to destroy them before being systematically erased, we have very clear evidence for the spontaneous mutilation of portrait statues. The evidence for this is very thoroughly covered by Varner in his 2001 article on this topic throughout the early empire, and it is expanded in parts in his 2004 survey of *damnatio memoriae* of imperial portraiture.<sup>276</sup> Varner gives an overview of the evidence for the direct mutilation of Domitian's statues, citing five different representations of Domitian that show evidence of being attacked in this way.<sup>277</sup> It is worth examining the two examples from or near Rome in detail. The first (Fig.1), now in the antiquarium of the Villa Barberini at Castel Gandolfo, and almost certainly originating from Domitian's villa in the same area, shows complete erasure of Domitian's portrait features, smoothed down likely for the purpose of being used as building material, according to Liverani.<sup>278</sup> The second (Fig.2) is a torso of a cuirassed statue of Domitian now found in Rome but the original provenance of which is unknown.<sup>279</sup> The relief sculpture on the cuirass shows what is undoubtedly targeted removal of the portrait features of both Domitian and Fortuna, with the latter acting as his tutelary goddess in the relief.<sup>280</sup> This erasure not only of Domitian, but also the goddess favouring him, represents a 'potent act of denigration' in Varner's opinion.<sup>281</sup> The torso also shows evidence of haphazard lacerations, perhaps demonstrating an uncontrolled attack against it, though this is difficult to distinguish from accidental damage.<sup>282</sup> The archaeological evidence for mutilation of portraits is understandably

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<sup>275</sup> Roche (2003); Højte (2005) p.57.

<sup>276</sup> Varner (2001a) & (2004).

<sup>277</sup> Varner (2001a) p.49.

<sup>278</sup> Castel Gandolfo, Antiquario. Liverani (1989) p.17-18; Varner (2004) p.112-3.

<sup>279</sup> Rome, Art Market. Varner (2001a) p.42; Stemmer (1978) p.112-3; Varner (2004) p.114. Stemmer confirms this as an image of Domitian on stylistic grounds on the aegis, as well as the iconography of the scene on the cuirass.

<sup>280</sup> Stemmer (1978) p.112.

<sup>281</sup> Varner (2004) p.114.

<sup>282</sup> Stemmer (1978) p.113. Perhaps the damage to the statue that left only the torso intact was sustained during the *damnatio memoriae*, though there is no way to know this for certain.

scarce, as those mutilated above a certain degree would be made unrecognisable by the attack, and those completely destroyed by the mutilation, or disposed of afterwards, would be removed from the archaeological record. Nevertheless, those examples which we can identify demonstrate the violent acts against the images of Domitian following his *damnatio memoriae*.

Those of Domitian's statues that were not mutilated, destroyed entirely or recycled, were often reworked into the portrait features of the statue into those of another, more respectable emperor, most often those of Nerva. The existing scholarship on this is quite extensive, and will be discussed in full in chapter 4 of this thesis.<sup>283</sup> The recarving process itself, after all, is a relatively slow one, and should not be considered to be part of the spectacle of destruction that immediately followed Domitian's condemnation by the senate, the subject of this chapter. However, there is one aspect that is directly relevant. In preparation for this recarving process, the portraits that were not attacked, or were not attacked to the extent that they could no longer be reworked, were removed and warehoused. This act of removal, or hiding from public view, is a crucial part of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, and demonstrates that statues need not be destroyed in order to contribute to the dramatic scene of Domitian's imprint on the city being eliminated. This may be particularly true for Domitian, and other first-century imperial *damnationes*. Varner argues that it was more common for Domitian's statues to be recarved as opposed to destroyed, and that this can also be said for most *damnationes* up until the reign of Hadrian, after which this relationship is reversed.<sup>284</sup> I think it is a mistake to assume that a direct comparison of the surviving examples of each can be considered to be an accurate representation of the relative prevalence of both methods, for the same reasons that it is problematic to make assumptions based on the proportion of surviving inscriptions that feature Domitian's name erased. Mutilation would (in many cases) have rendered portraits entirely unrecognisable, and complete destruction could leave no discernible archaeological record. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that relative to later periods, there is more warehousing and recarving of statues for *damnationes* in the first century.<sup>285</sup>

While the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian was incredibly extensive, it did not achieve the complete destruction of his images and inscriptions in the city. While the 40% statistic

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<sup>283</sup> For discussion of this in relation to the portrait statues of Domitian, see Bergmann, M. & Zanker (1981); Varner (2000a) p.172-175; Varner (2004) p.115-6, 118-9, 123-5; Varner (2008) p.144-145; Galinsky (2008) p.5.

<sup>284</sup> Varner (2008) p.133-4; 146-7. Kousser puts forward the view that this changed later, at the start of the third century AD – Kousser (2015) p.45-6.

<sup>285</sup> This change is covered by Varner throughout his 2004 work. See also Pollini (2006) p.594.

mentioned earlier does not represent the total proportion of erased inscriptions in Rome, it does serve to demonstrate that many inscriptions mentioning Domitian did survive. Some endured due to practical concerns, as is the case of his name on military diplomas and the Flavian municipal law.<sup>286</sup> Others survive on private monuments, such as funerary inscriptions of those still proud of their connection to him – a particularly notable example of this being the tombstone of the captor of Decabalus, Tiberius Claudius Maximus, though many more examples exist.<sup>287</sup> Many portrait statues of Domitian, additionally, are known to have survived the violence following his condemnation.<sup>288</sup> While we lack provenance for so many of them, as is typical for portrait statues that survive in good condition, I would agree with Varner's assessment that most of these would have survived by being warehoused for potential reworking at a later date. In fact, we are fortunate enough to have discovered one of these statues in such a context, as it was found with three other portraits of condemned emperors. Varner suggests that since this warehouse was found on the Esquiline, the statue was originally displayed in the imperial gardens and residences in that area.<sup>289</sup> Two other statues for which the provenance is known, however, demonstrate different possible scenarios for their preservation. The first, from Ostia, was found inside the tomb of Julia Procula on the Isola Sacra.<sup>290</sup> As Varner points out, the tomb may have belonged to freedmen associated with the family of Julius Proculus, a senator who came to prominence under Domitian, and so the portrait was possibly placed in the tomb while the family was favoured by Domitian, or placed there after his *damnatio*.<sup>291</sup> Both possibilities, I would argue, are significant for the reception of the spectacle. Either the family that favoured Domitian were aware that at least one of his statues was saved from destruction or recarving by its placement in one of their tombs, or the statue was deliberately placed in the tomb, lest it fall victim to the *damnatio memoriae*. Both would have had consequences for the reception of the spectacle of Domitian's *damnatio* by his supporters, as will be discussed later.<sup>292</sup> The second (Fig.3) is a statue of Domitian as Diomedes, now found in Munich.<sup>293</sup> It was found in Labicum in 1758, approximately 20km

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<sup>286</sup> It is possible that the original decree in Rome from which the copies of the Flavian municipal law originated was mutilated - Flower (2006) p.245-247.

<sup>287</sup> Flower (2006) p.253-6; *AE* (1969/70) 583. This is somewhat exceptional in its 'loudness', as well as honouring Domitian with his title *IMP.*, which Flower points out may be the consequence of a significant amount of time having passed since the death of Domitian by this point. However, while Domitian is indeed honoured with this title, the contrast between this and the *Divo Traiano* that immediately follows it could still act as a comparative condemnation. *AE* (1985) 721. For other similar instances, see Cooley (2012) p.227; *CIL* XIV 3612 = *ILS* 1025.

<sup>288</sup> Varner (2004) p.125-128.

<sup>289</sup> Varner (2004) p.126-7.

<sup>290</sup> Ostia, Museo, Sala VI, inv.19; Calza (1964) p.46-47.

<sup>291</sup> Jones, B. (1992) p.176; Varner (2004) p.127. The latter interpretation is favoured by Calza (1964) p.47.

<sup>292</sup> Below, p.83.

<sup>293</sup> Munich, Glyptothek 394; Wegner *et al.* (1966) p.32, 41, 102.

southeast of Rome, in the ruins of a villa belonging to one of Domitian's freedmen.<sup>294</sup> Varner correctly assesses that it was stored in the villa following the *damnatio* of Domitian, having been removed from the home of one of his supporters or associates.<sup>295</sup> I would disagree with his conclusion that the sole reason why it was not later reworked was that it was already a rework of a Neronian portrait.<sup>296</sup> It seems equally likely that the statue, having been stored in the villa of one of Domitian's freedmen, was simply kept by this freedman, though not on public display, and was never given the opportunity to be reworked. It is possible that the fact that it had already been reworked once precluded the possibility of it being reworked a second time if such an opportunity had been made available. Nevertheless, the storage of this statue in the private residence of one of Domitian's supporters would have had profound effects on their interpretation of the spectacle of Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*, as will be discussed in full below.<sup>297</sup>

In contrast to the extensive evidence for the erasure of inscriptions featuring Domitian, there are relatively few inscriptions in which we can identify that Commodus' name has been erased as a result of his condemnation.<sup>298</sup> It should be noted that this could be due to a number of reasons. It is possible that it indicates the very opposite – that the *damnatio memoriae* was so thorough as to leave many inscriptions featuring the name of Commodus as unrecognisable as ever having borne his name. We should be aware of survivorship bias in this case, as above. It is also possible that, in Rome at least, this is due to Commodus not being a very prolific benefactor in comparison to other emperors – there were simply fewer inscriptions that needed to be erased.<sup>299</sup> Calomino nevertheless suggests that this is a result of Commodus' rehabilitation after Pertinax's death, thus leaving only three months for the *damnatio memoriae* to take place. That this could significantly affect the number of inscriptions erased suggests that the obliteration of Commodus' name in inscriptions was a much slower process, and that, thus, it could not have been part of the spectacle of *damnatio*. However, as I will discuss below, inscriptions could be attacked in a quicker, and sometimes more temporary, way – such that they could be involved in the *damnatio* event alongside portraits.

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<sup>294</sup> Bergmann, M. & Zanker (1981) p.370; Wegner *et al.* (1966) p.102; Varner (2004) p.125.

<sup>295</sup> Varner (2004) p.125.

<sup>296</sup> Varner (2004) p.126.

<sup>297</sup> Below, p.83.

<sup>298</sup> Calomino (2016) p.104.

<sup>299</sup> Varner (2004) p.137.

We have very clear evidence, however, for the mutilation of Commodus' statues, with, fortunately, a number of examples from Rome and its immediate surroundings.<sup>300</sup> One extremely fragmentary portrait from the Caelian Antiquarium (Fig.4) clearly, as Varner concludes, owes its state to deliberate destruction, as the facial features are entirely obliterated, whereas the coiffure is relatively intact.<sup>301</sup> Two more portraits, one from Rome (Fig.5),<sup>302</sup> and one from Ostia (Fig.6),<sup>303</sup> seem relatively undamaged at first glance. However, this is because they have been heavily restored in modernity. In both examples, the restorations mask deliberate and extensive damage to the face. In the portrait from Rome, almost the entire face is modern, with the contrast between this and the extremely well preserved remainder of the original statue highlighting the intentionality of the destruction, as Varner points out.<sup>304</sup> Commodus' *damnatio* also provides us with some intriguing examples of statue removal during the spectacle of *damnatio*. The famous bust of Commodus as Hercules was found within a cryptoporticus near the imperial gardens on the Esquiline, alongside statues of other members of his family – evidently they were originally on display in the gardens.<sup>305</sup> Since they were found together, it is possible that this was a warehouse, for portraits which could be restored later. Varner suggests that the portraits may have been stored and then redisplayed later, once Commodus was rehabilitated under Didius Julianus and Septimius Severus.<sup>306</sup> However, their find spot, in the cryptoporticus, seems to suggest that either this never happened, or it was stored again at a later date, for whatever reason.

Clearly, there is a wealth of evidence demonstrating the occurrence of the *damnationes* of both Domitian and Commodus. The literary texts discussing both events, particularly that of Domitian, serve to evidence the emotional response of the witnesses and participants, while offering a depiction of how the destruction was carried out, and the atmosphere surrounding it. The detailed defacement and mutilation in the material evidence, meanwhile, can help to confirm this image, and paint a picture of a disordered and semi-spontaneous event.

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<sup>300</sup> It may be that this is confirmation of the claim in the sources that Commodus was unusually prolific in placing statues in the city, but I would be cautious to claim that this is anything more than a coincidence with such a small sample size. Varner (2004) p.138-42.

<sup>301</sup> Rome, Antiquario Comunale sul Celia, without inv no.

<sup>302</sup> Rome, Stanza degli Imperatori 40, inv. 445.

<sup>303</sup> See Fea (1819) p.89.

<sup>304</sup> Varner (2004) p.138.

<sup>305</sup> Varner (2004) p.140; Huet (2004) p.248.

<sup>306</sup> Varner (2004) p.141. See below, p.167.

## The practical mechanics of the spectacle

To understand the spectacle in the role of the eliminator of Domitian's intended identity as a positive *exemplum*, we first need to develop, to some extent, a model of how it functioned. While Stewart has provided his own detailed analysis of this, especially from a psychological point of view, there are some significant questions that he leaves unanswered. Primarily, these relate to the practical concerns, such as how the statues were destroyed or mutilated, and how other materials suffered. I will also offer my own interpretations of the mechanics of the spectacle. I will argue that while it was not organised by the authorities directly, their endorsement, via decree and involvement, provided the necessary spark to begin the mass destruction that was driven by the populace. In short, the authorities manipulated the 'mob' into destroying the images of Domitian themselves, an act that was much more politically beneficial and symbolic than simply ordering their destruction to be carried out by specialist groups.

The latter point is hinted at by Stewart throughout his discussion of both *damnatio memoriae* and spontaneous statue destruction. He points out that the sources, the vast majority of the time, credit the general populace as being the perpetrators of the destruction, something we have already seen in the discussion of the *damnationes* of both Domitian and Commodus.<sup>307</sup> Additionally, that private participation was expected in the sources, and that individual private statues are found destroyed in the provinces, often in unusual ways, such as a head of Domitian found at the base of a well in Munigua, Andalusia, suggests that 'central authority could only have been responsible for instructions and a few prominent exemplary examples'.<sup>308</sup> He rightly draws a parallel between this and the process for the creation of these portrait statues – a few examples set out by the authorities which are then copied by private individuals.<sup>309</sup> Stewart later goes on to cite Turner and Killian's theories on the collective behaviour of crowds, pointing out that, according to their model, while crowds may join together to 'recreate the satisfaction of an earlier crowd experience', it does not develop naturally into a mindless mob – 'an element of spontaneity is required for inhibitions to be overcome'.<sup>310</sup> This is the impression we get in the sources. Suetonius' account of Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* has it begin with the senators themselves, potentially setting an example for the people to follow. Dio's brief account of the destruction of Commodus' statues immediately follows a joint condemnation of the emperor by the senate and people, presumably following the senate's decree against Commodus which is quoted in the *Historia*

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<sup>307</sup> Stewart (2003) p.270; Dio 74.2.1 (Index 7); Pliny *Pan.* 52 (Index 5).

<sup>308</sup> Stewart (2003) p.270-1; Varner (2004) p.126; Benoist (2004) p.179.

<sup>309</sup> Stewart (2003) p.271; Gregory (1994) p.95.

<sup>310</sup> Turner & Killian (1987) p.17; Stewart (2003) p.284 – 285.

*Augusta*.<sup>311</sup> Furthermore, one interesting detail in the latter's account of the reign of Pertinax may provide confirmation of this model, at least in Commodus' example:

*sane iam postero kalendarum die cum statuæ Commodi deicerentur...*

'But, indeed, on the day after the Kalends of January, when the statues of Commodus were overthrown....'<sup>312</sup>

That the author has the *damnatio* take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January is significant, considering that it also recognises that Commodus was killed, and Pertinax hailed as his successor, on the night of the 31<sup>st</sup> December.<sup>313</sup> One may be tempted to ascribe this delay to a simple lack of awareness on the behalf of the citizens. However, from Herodian's account, we know that Laetus and Eclectus, the chief conspirators of Commodus' assassination, made special effort to inform the populace before the new year's festival began.<sup>314</sup> Furthermore, we are explicitly told by Herodian that these people, once informed, gathered in public places to express their joy and denounce Commodus, and subsequently pressure the Praetorian Guard to pledge their support to Pertinax.<sup>315</sup> We cannot know the exact reason for this delay. It is possible, for instance, that Pertinax was originally attempting to rehabilitate Commodus, at least partially, and after witnessing the negative reaction to his decision to bury his body in the Mausoleum of Hadrian, compromised by allowing the *damnatio memoriae* on the day after the festival. Regardless of the reasoning, the fact that it could be delayed, especially a day after the people had already gathered in public places to celebrate Commodus' death, suggests that an act that implies official 'endorsement' was sometimes necessary to encourage and empower ordinary citizens to participate in attacks on the images and inscriptions of an emperor on a large scale.

The texts of Juvenal and Suetonius discussed earlier could also lend credence to this theory. In both cases, the indifference of the general populace is referenced – Juvenal mocks the perpetrators' lack of concern as to the crimes and identity of the condemned individual, while Suetonius reports the apparent indifferent reaction of the people to Domitian's death.<sup>316</sup> Juvenal therefore implies that the people participating are opportunists, taking advantage of a chance to commit this kind of act. Suetonius immediately follows this description of the people's indifference with his account of the senators personally beginning Domitian's

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<sup>311</sup> Dio 74.2.1 (Index 7); SHA *Comm.* 18-19.

<sup>312</sup> SHA *Pert.* 6.3.

<sup>313</sup> SHA *Pert.* 4.8.

<sup>314</sup> Herodian 2.2.2.

<sup>315</sup> Herodian 2.2.3-10.

<sup>316</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 5.1; Juv. *Sat.* 10.66-74 (Index 4 & 6). See above, p.58.



*damnatio memoriae*. He thus implies, I would argue, that it is only after the senate's decree that the people involved themselves in Domitian's condemnation.

This is logical not only from a psychological point of view, but also from a legal one. There are number of instances of which we are aware in which damage to an imperial portrait has resulted in severe punishment for the perpetrator.<sup>317</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup>-century Justinian digest, in fact, specifically forgives individuals of *maiestas* if they had damaged a statue by accident, citing a rescript of Severus and Caracalla, or had damaged a statue during *damnatio*.<sup>318</sup> Even disrespecting a statue of the emperor could result in punishment, as we can see in the aforementioned story in Cassius Dio.<sup>319</sup> It is thus logical that Roman citizens would be somewhat reticent about destroying the statues of Commodus without official sanction. This is not to suggest that statue destruction could not happen spontaneously, as there are many instances where this is indeed the case, but rather that the state could incite the people towards destroying the statues of a condemned tyrant when it chose to. Thus, the new regime gains the benefit of appearing to have the support of the wider populace (as their first 'command' is widely followed) as well as the positive connotations of a pseudo-spontaneous spectacle of popular violence to celebrate their coming into power, discussed in more detail below. From this initial demonstration by the authorities, or from this central crowd, the destruction could spread organically, at least within Rome itself, as groups witnessed their fellow citizens attack and destroy statues, and began to imitate them.<sup>320</sup> Here, the apparent ubiquity of Domitian's and Commodus' statues would, ironically, work against the preservation of the identity of the condemned tyrant, as they would only serve to further spread the message of their condemnation.<sup>321</sup>

It is worth taking some time to discuss the mechanics of the destruction in more detail, as in order to understand the potential interpretations made by those witnessing and participating in the spectacle, it is necessary to know in as much detail as possible what exactly they were seeing. In the case of portrait statues, we are extraordinarily fortunate. An image (Fig.7-8), from the Via Paisiello hypogeum in Rome, probably from the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, depicts a Christian iconoclast, as is clear from its wider context, pulling down what is presumably a cult

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<sup>317</sup> See Pekáry (1985) p.139-41 for analysis - *Dig.* 48.4.6; Seneca *De Benef.* 3.26; Tac. *Ann.* 1.73-4, Suet. *Tib.* 58.1, Dio 57.24.7; Philostr. *vit.Apoll.* 1.15; Tac. *Hist.* 1.41, 1.55-6, 3.12-14; Stewart (1999) p.243; Crawford (2010) p.49.

<sup>318</sup> *Dig.* 48.4.4.1, 48.4.5.1.

<sup>319</sup> Dio 67.12.2.

<sup>320</sup> Bats (2003) p.287.

<sup>321</sup> Stewart (1999) p.247-8; Stewart (2003) p.268.

statue, using the method of tying a rope around the neck of the target statue.<sup>322</sup> There is no surviving visual representation of *damnatio memoriae*, but if there was, it would likely look like this, as Stewart says.<sup>323</sup> This is strongly supported by the language used in the discussion of *damnatio memoriae* by ancient sources – the use of the verbs *detrahere* and *trahere*, throughout the *Historia Augusta*’s version of the acclamations made by the senate, and when referencing the statues specifically, are good indications of this – the statues are dragged or pulled **down** by the ropes.<sup>324</sup> It has been suggested by some that the use of these words may refer to the statues being ritualistically dragged through the streets as a form of *poena post mortem* by proxy, a theory I do not think is incompatible with the suggestion that it also refers to the method by which the statues were toppled.<sup>325</sup>

This image of statue-toppling is clearly evocative of examples from recent memory, such as the destruction of the statue of Saddam Hussein in Firdos square after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, an example which was used by Calomino to engage visitors in the 2016-17 exhibition on *damnatio memoriae* in the British museum.<sup>326</sup> However, considering the contentious nature of the events leading up to and surrounding the destruction of that statue, perhaps a better example would be the destruction of the Stalin monument during the Hungarian revolution in 1956. This is an example cited by a number of scholars commenting on Roman *damnatio memoriae* (see Fig.9).<sup>327</sup>

“The 5,000 students who were meeting in front of the Petofi Monument in Budapest were joined shortly after dusk by thousands of workers and others. The great crowd then marches to the Stalin monument. Ropes were wound round the statue’s neck, and, to cheers, the crowd attempted to topple the statue. But it would not budge. They finally managed to melt Stalin’s knees by using welding torches. When the body of the statue broke apart and his legs crashed on the ground, the crowd started shouting ‘Russians go home, Russians go home.’ .... With banners, iron pipes, and various other tools, the crowd cut and broke the monument into countless pieces. Several demonstrators told me they wanted a souvenir of that – Stalin.... I have never seen more determination in the faces of a crowd... I’m sure they were all ready to risk

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<sup>322</sup> Stewart (1999) p.264; Stewart (2003) p.294. Stewart points out that the statue in the image resembles some portrait statues of emperors in heroic nudity. Carletti (1971) p.112. The fact that the fascia also includes an image of someone stoning the target statue (Fig.7-8), when taken with the mentions of statue-stoning in the Justinian digest suggests that stoning was also commonplace.

<sup>323</sup> Stewart (2003) p.294.

<sup>324</sup> SHA *Comm.* 18-19; Bats (2003) p.287 n.40. Huet points out that the use of the passive makes it difficult to determine agency, but that it is a problem that ought to be addressed – Huet (2004) p.242.

<sup>325</sup> Stewart (2003) p.274; Pollini (2006) p.591.

<sup>326</sup> See also Calomino (2016) p.1.

<sup>327</sup> Courtney (1980) p.460; Pekáry (1985) p.135; Stewart (2003) p.268-9, etc.

their lives for their cause....” – An Austrian eyewitness, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 October 1956.<sup>328</sup>

Modern manifestations of cultural repression like this (and that of the Saddam Hussein statue if certain accounts are to be believed) show that, even when a target cannot be toppled quickly, and even requires specialist tools, the anger of the crowd does not diminish, and they attack it with equal zeal as if it had been toppled immediately. In fact, the anticipation of the statue falling could even contribute to the violent mood of the waiting crowd. In addition, the target of the destruction following the statue being torn down is most commonly the face. There are many images of the head of the statue of Stalin being directly attacked by the people. This demonstrates the crowd’s intense vigour to attack his portrait features, just as we have seen in Roman examples. Additionally, the fact that there are many images of this exhibits that the photographers witnessing the destruction were particularly interested in the damage to the face as well. It has been thoroughly shown by now that the sensory organs of the face are the main target of deliberate destruction. Damage to the nose, mouth and eyes, in fact, is one of the main signs to differentiate deliberate mutilation from accidental damage.<sup>329</sup> In addition, this can be seen in the texts that have been surveyed above. References to the face or expression of the condemned can be found in both Pliny and Juvenal. In Pliny, the sentence focusing on the function of the image as a stand-in for the living body of Domitian is centred around the damage the crowd does to his *superbissimos vultus* (‘most arrogant face’). In Juvenal, it is said that the pots and pans (made from recycled metal from the statues) are derived from the face (*facie*) of Sejanus, and that this is what is representative of the former power of the man.<sup>330</sup> The crowd also comments, shallowly, on the lips and face (*‘labra, vultus’*) of the condemned, suggesting that this is what their attention is drawn towards.<sup>331</sup> I would argue that this suggests that the purpose of toppling the statues was, first and foremost, to allow the face to be attacked by the crowd.<sup>332</sup> This is enormously powerful symbolically. One may imagine the citizens tearing down a statue of Commodus, the ‘divine’ *Hercules Romanus*, who had thought himself immune to the crowd, from his high pedestal, being dragged down

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<sup>328</sup> Lasky (1957) p.54. See also Lendvai (2008) p.14-15.

<sup>329</sup> See Huet (2004) p.240; Varner (2012) p.124; Kristensen (2015) p.670-71.

<sup>330</sup> *Juv. Sat.* 10.63 (Index 6).

<sup>331</sup> *Juv. Sat.* 10.67-8 (Index 6).

<sup>332</sup> It is also noteworthy that, both in all modern examples of portrait statue toppling (that I have encountered) and the Roman depiction, the statue is being toppled forwards, rather than backwards. This could have consequences for the interpretation of the destruction – that the people want to see the face of the emperor as ‘he’ is destroyed, or that the crowd specifically wants to bring the face towards them to allow it to be attacked, or perhaps falling face-first would be more humiliating than falling on one’s back. However, this somewhat relies on interpreting the larger size of the figure in the Via Paisiello image compared to the statue as an attempt at foreshortening, and that this is truly representative of typical statue removal during *damnatio*. See also above, p.73.

by the force of the massed people, waiting with mallets and chisels to obliterate his features from the statue, thus denying his divinity. Thus the toppling of a statue could be read as allegorical for the assassination of the emperor himself.

Something which Stewart neglects to mention, being outside of the scope of his work, are the other key types of representation attacked during *damnatio memoriae*. Again, Commodus' *damnatio* may be revealing. As has been mentioned, there are relatively few mutilated inscriptions of Commodus compared to his portraits, likely because of his rehabilitation three months after his death, indicating that the erasure of inscriptions was a more gradual process than the destruction of portraits. However, inscriptions could potentially play a role via more temporary or short-term forms of erasure. In the *Historia Augusta's* account of the life of Elagabalus, the emperor at one point orders that the inscriptions of Severus Alexander be smeared with mud by the soldiers, 'as is usually done to a tyrant'.<sup>333</sup> The fact that this is the chief action that Elagabalus chose to go alongside his order to assassinate Severus Alexander, and the soldier's emotional reaction to it (they were angered that they were ordered to do this, we are told), suggests that this had a similar symbolic effect as the outright destruction of the inscriptions. Thus, attacks on inscriptions could take forms that were much more conducive to the quasi-spontaneous nature of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*.

Inscriptions and statues are not the only physical media which would suffer during *damnatio memoriae*, of course, as the building works of Domitian, it could be argued, carried his memory equally well. However, as has been very convincingly argued by Davies, buildings themselves, with the exception of any dedicatory inscriptions placed upon them, are very rarely attacked or destroyed unless the buildings themselves are inherently offensive in some way. Hence the possible reconstruction of the 'temple of Elagabalus' by Severus Alexander into a temple to Jupiter Ultor.<sup>334</sup> However, even in this case, the conversion could not have occurred spontaneously, so we cannot say it would have been part of the initial spectacle.

One last medium which was subject to damage during *damnatio memoriae* is coinage.<sup>335</sup> Calomino, in his recent and notable discussion of this topic, makes a brief analysis of the spectacle and seems to reach the same conclusions as Stewart and myself, that the reactions of the citizens against the symbols of the tyrant were initiated by some official

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<sup>333</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 13.7; Varner (2004) p.182. Eusebius also reports that the *damnatio* of Maximinus involved painting black paint on the faces of statues of him and his family members, suggesting at the use of paint as a quick but temporary method of erasure. This method would also, of course, have worked to obscure inscriptions – Euseb. *Ecc. Hist.* 9.11.2. See also above, p.64, n.275.

<sup>334</sup> Richardson (1992) p.142; below, p.151.

<sup>335</sup> Crawford (2010) p.55-56.

action, which then spread through people imitating these official actions as well as each other.<sup>336</sup> In attempting to assign agency to the various ways in which *damnatio* could affect coinage, both Calomino and Hostein correctly assume that the larger-scale actions – countermarking, overstriking and withdrawal – could only have been carried out by the authorities, whereas the other forms – defacement or erasure of both the images and the inscriptions on the coins – could have been done either systematically or ‘randomly by individuals’.<sup>337</sup> The evidence for this ‘spontaneous defacement’ will be the main focus here, as it could be considered part of the wider *damnatio* spectacle, and, as Calomino points out, the ubiquity of coins in urban Roman society means they are highly exposed to acts of condemnation, and so certainly deserve consideration when discussing this event.<sup>338</sup>

The evidence for private individuals attacking the coins of Domitian and Commodus is somewhat problematic. We do have evidence for spontaneous, or at the very least, ‘individual’, acts of destruction on coins of both emperors. For Domitian, we have at least one example from Rome (Fig.10) which shows clearly deliberate lacerations, and no evidence of any widespread official actions against his imperial coinage.<sup>339</sup> Commodus’ examples are slightly more problematic. Calomino draws attention to the types that feature a deep cut, or cuts, across the imperial portrait (Fig.11) as being potential examples of *damnatio memoriae*, while remaining cautious.<sup>340</sup> He says that these could simply be misinterpreted examples of testing cuts to check the purity of the metal, as argued by Boon, or accidental damage.<sup>341</sup> Boon has also argued that such slashes could have been attempts to demonetise the coins for use as grave goods, all of which place doubt on this sort of damage being identified as *damnatio memoriae*.<sup>342</sup> However, we should be careful to dismiss all such cases of deliberate damage as being for practical purposes. Sanctuary and burial sites are easily identifiable, and so if the provenance of the coin can be identified, we should not assume it was marked to be out-of-circulation unless it has come from such a site. Furthermore, Boon’s suggestion that deliberate slashes may have been carried out to test the coins’ purity seems to have been based purely on the fact that plated coins were common forgeries.<sup>343</sup> In the absence of any direct evidence of this practice of testing forged coins with slashes, across the obverse, we should not assume that it was common. Furthermore, the mutilation of a portrait of an

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<sup>336</sup> Calomino (2016) p.15-16.

<sup>337</sup> For the differentiation between these, see Calomino (2016) p.16; Varner (2000b) p.45-46; Hostein (2004) p.223-5; Pollini (2006) p.591. Hostein also points out that the variety of methods that were used may allude to a variety in the identities of the perpetrators – Hostein (2004) p.223.

<sup>338</sup> Calomino (2016) p.16-17.

<sup>339</sup> Varner (2000a) p.47; Calomino (2016) p.96; Hostein (2004) p.229.

<sup>340</sup> Calomino (2016) p.107-8.

<sup>341</sup> Calomino (2016) p.16; Hostein (2004) p.227.

<sup>342</sup> Boon (1974) p.11.

<sup>343</sup> Boon (1974) p.11

emperor on a coin would have been taken seriously, and it appears coins portraits were treated as just as sacrosanct as portrait statues.<sup>344</sup> We should also remain aware of the facial focus that can be seen on deliberately damaged portrait statues. Therefore, it seems more likely than not that a verifiably deliberate slash across the head on the obverse of an imperial coin is evidence of condemnation on the part of the perpetrator.<sup>345</sup>

Additionally, there are a few examples of medallions (Fig.12), which clearly demonstrate the erasure of Commodus' image.<sup>346</sup> While, for the purpose of this study, medallions can be treated as in the same 'category' of images as coins, it should be noted that since they were not intended strictly as currency, their audience would have been different.<sup>347</sup> Nevertheless, these, when taken with clear examples of individuals defacing provincial coins of Commodus, demonstrate that defacement of Commodus' coinage did occur, and it is likely that Rome was not an exception. The relative paucity of the examples of both medallions and coins found that exhibit deliberate damage has been argued by Erdöhelyi to be a result of 'filtering' by collectors, as damaged examples would have likely been discarded by collectors, assuming that they were damaged naturally, or vandalised in modernity.<sup>348</sup> I would also suggest that this could have extended to antiquity – if burial goods were damaged in a similar way to take them out of circulation, it is possible that *damnatio*-damaged coins would also have been rejected by some individuals, and melted down for the metal they contained. Thus, similar to the epigraphic statistics mentioned earlier, we ought to be careful to judge the prevalence of this practice on the basis of the number of surviving examples.

At first glance, it would seem that attacking coins would be a much less powerful or significant symbolic gesture when compared to vandalising the emperor's name on a great inscription, or destroying and mutilating his portrait statues. However, there are a number of factors which motivated people to participate in this kind of damage. The first is the universal spread and accessibility of the medium. Much has been said on the potential for images on coins to spread the messages promoted by the imperial regime, on account of their absolute ubiquity among the populace of the empire.<sup>349</sup> This omnipresence of coinage, Calomino suggests, would have meant that these images are thus the most accessible for individuals to attack, if they so chose.<sup>350</sup> If a citizen would not have had the opportunity to attack a portrait statue directly: for instance, the image on the coin would have offered the possibility of

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<sup>344</sup> See Rowan (2012) p.29; Calomino (2016) p.16-17; above, p.72.

<sup>345</sup> Sear (2000) p.521.

<sup>346</sup> Calomino (2016) p.108.

<sup>347</sup> Calomino (2016) p.108.

<sup>348</sup> Erdöhelyi (1976) p.6; Jaonas (1937-8) p.89-91.

<sup>349</sup> For example, Burnett (1987) p.66-85.

<sup>350</sup> Calomino (2016) p.17.

attaining the same feelings of vengeance-by-proxy which Pliny described occurring for portrait statues. I would also argue that the ubiquity of coinage would have also added a further motivation for individuals to attack these images. Just as the images were intended to spread the message of the emperor while he was alive – and promote his intended positive identity – a deliberately damaged coin would spread the message of his condemnation via the same means.<sup>351</sup> Since coinage would have circulated in the hands of many thousands of ordinary citizens before being taken out of circulation, this gives individuals the opportunity to ‘commandeer’ this system to spread their own messages.

The evidence for creativity in both ancient and modern examples of coin defacement is very important in this respect.<sup>352</sup> Several coins of Nero demonstrate the potential for creativity clearly.<sup>353</sup> These coins were modified by individuals following Nero’s death to make the portrait resemble Vitellius, Galba or Vespasian, presumably by supporters of the respective claimants (e.g Fig.13).<sup>354</sup> These examples demonstrate the power of this kind of re-engraving to spread messages, as the modified coins would serve to promote the image of the respective claimant as being the most ‘true’ anti-Nero. There is additionally one example (Fig.14) which shows the portrait of Nero modified in a different way, with the top of his head becoming bald, but with the rear of his head featuring a woman’s hairstyle. Calomino astutely identifies this as referring to Nero’s tendency to let his hair grow long and arrange it into curls, a practice which Suetonius considers ‘shameful’ (*pudendus*).<sup>355</sup> Furthermore, two examples of coins of Maximinus Thrax show a similar kind of modification.<sup>356</sup> On both these two coins, the portrait of Maximinus on the obverse is modified to resemble the emperor’s head impaled upon a pike. On one of these examples (Fig.15), the portrait on the reverse is modified in a similar way, and extra details of parasites eating his corpse are added to the obverse portrait.<sup>357</sup> These images are ‘commemorating’ the method by which Maximinus and his son were killed at Aquileia, with their heads shown off on pikes to prove their demise – we even hear of the animals that consumed his corpse specifically from Herodian’s account.<sup>358</sup>

This specific mockery being practised by individuals in this context is intriguing. It is apparent that this demonstrates the capability of people to immediately begin redeveloping

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<sup>351</sup> Varner (2000a) p.49; Hostein (2004) p.230.

<sup>352</sup> Calomino (2016) p.18-21.

<sup>353</sup> See Calomino (2016) p.71. For the unmodified examples, see RIC I Nero, nos. 100, 102, 147, 199, 525.

<sup>354</sup> Calomino (2016) p.70. There is a lack of examples of conversion to Otho, notably. It is possible that this was significantly more difficult to re-engrave from Neronian portraits, or, as I believe is more likely, since Otho would attempt to rehabilitate Nero to some degree, that promotion of his claim at the expense of Nero would be contradictory to his message.

<sup>355</sup> Suet. *Nero* 51.1; Calomino (2016) p.72.

<sup>356</sup> Hostein (2004) p.228. For the unmodified coin, see RIC IV.2 Maximinus, no. 90.

<sup>357</sup> Calomino (2016) p.175-6.

<sup>358</sup> SHA *Maxim.* 23.5-7; Herodian 8.5.9.

the identity of the tyrant into something negative, with the Maximinus example being particularly significant as evidence of the memorialisation of the tyrant's assassination. However, the pseudo-anonymous and widely spreading method by which this is done in this example is particularly interesting.<sup>359</sup> It is easy to draw a parallel between this and the potential of the use of social media in the present day by individuals to spread critical satire throughout their cultural sphere. The only analogous medium in Rome would have been anonymous flyers or graffiti, but the dissemination of the messages of these would be limited, as they would only have been spread by those who would deliberately intend to spread them.<sup>360</sup> This potential would have added further motivation to make a contribution to the overall spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* by damaging or modifying the coinage in one's possession.

#### The elimination of the tyrant's identity

The end result of all of this was to transform the memory of the condemned emperor into something negative, removing his previous intended positive identity and replacing it with that of a negative *exemplum* of tyranny. The various interpretations made by those who participated in or witnessed the spectacle of *damnatio* would have initiated this process. Below, I will discuss the spectacle as a liminal event, marking the transition from the old regime to the new, and how this effect was intensified by the way the participants would have been viewed by their contemporaries. I will also discuss the specific associations that violence had in the Roman world, and how these associations affected the first stages of the construction of the tyrant's negative identity.

The first, and most important, psychological effect of the spectacle, is a consequence of the role it played as a transition. This effect is something that Stewart comments on specifically, and is the most commonly recognised immediate consequence of *damnatio memoriae*:

'The large and prominent statues of emperors in public places must have made a particularly striking impression when crowds pulled them from their bases and then, as we shall see, dismantled them, abused them, and dragged them through the streets. Such violence was inflicted upon the body of the emperor himself. But there

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<sup>359</sup> Hostein assumes that due to the provenance of one of these, from Aquileia, that they were done spontaneously and unconnected with the official *damnatio* at Rome, though with the paucity of examples and the difficulty of dating the deposition of coins, it is difficult to be certain – Hostein (2004) p.228.

<sup>360</sup> The psychological impact on the supporters of the denigrated emperor unintentionally spreading the message of said emperor's condemnation should also be considered, since it was likely more immediate than the issues of new coinage by the successor.



was only one corpse, and thousands of statues. Statues gave greater exposure to the annihilation of the enemy, as they did to the emperor's ruling presence before his fall.<sup>361</sup>

The spectacle was effectively a publicity event for the fall of the predecessor's regime. Naturally, following the assassination of Domitian, there would have been insecurity as to what would follow – whether the perpetrators would be punished, and supporters of Domitian would continue ruling in a similar way, or whether Nerva, with the support of the senate, would persist. The widespread destruction of the images of Domitian would offer certainty, as a symbolic act to mark the end of his reign, and the end of the celebration of his reign.<sup>362</sup> It also marks a reversal of norms, a marker for difference between the old and the new – the successor often framed himself as being the opposite of what had come before, as can clearly be seen in Pliny's *Panegyricus*.<sup>363</sup> I agree entirely with Stewart that this is a very significant immediate consequence of *damnatio*.

The celebratory aspect of the spectacle and the positive associations of mob violence in Rome would have potentially intensified these interpretations. Firstly, the apparently 'joyful' nature of the event. This is something highlighted by both Pliny and Juvenal as being a key aspect – the spectacle was as much a vengeful symbolic uprising against the rule of a tyrant as it was a celebration of his downfall, and anticipation of change.<sup>364</sup> This intensely positive emotional scene associated with the death of the tyrant would lead to further negative associations with his life, and *positive* associations with those who had ended it, or enabled its ending. This emotional response, in addition to the anger, is very important in understanding how the positive memories of the deposed tyrant were eliminated and then subsequently replaced. This atmosphere would also have had other consequences, however. For every staunch supporter or detractor of Domitian, there would be many non-elite Romans in the city who had no strong opinions on the emperor, or were completely politically apathetic as long as they were being fed and entertained. When they saw the crowds of people destroying images of Domitian and rejoicing at his demise, such people might have simply taken advantage of the opportunity to revel, and derive some raucous sense of fun from smashing images of the authority figure. This is something specifically ridiculed by Juvenal – that many of those participating in the destruction had no particular grievances with the condemned man to

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<sup>361</sup> Stewart (2003) p.268; Stewart (1999) p.246.

<sup>362</sup> For the acts of destruction as a liminal event, see Stewart (2003) p.271; Stewart (1999) p.249; Hostein (2004) p.232.

<sup>363</sup> Stewart (2003) p.2.

<sup>364</sup> This has already been discussed for Juvenal; in Pliny see *publico gaudio litaverunt... iuvabat illidere solo superbissimos vultus... Nemo tam temperans gaudii seraeque laetitiae....cernere laceros artus* – Pliny *Pan.* 52.3-5 (Index 5).

speak of.<sup>365</sup> We have already seen, in addition, how Pliny positioned himself to take advantage of the hatred of Domitian, as to take part in it would signal his support for the new regime.<sup>366</sup> Alternatively, it is known that punishments for criminals in the arena gave the spectators a sense of moral superiority over those subjected to punishment. People may have seen their involvement in the punishment of the tyrant in a similar light, as an opportunity to find self-contentment in the condemnation of others.<sup>367</sup>

We ought to discuss here the moral associations of violence in ancient Rome. After all, in our modern, post-enlightenment era, violence is seen as inherently negative, and incidents of mob violence are looked down upon unless they are specifically and individually justified. In a general sense, it is widely agreed that the popularity and extent of the gladiatorial games in Rome itself would have, to some degree, desensitised the Romans to public violence.<sup>368</sup> Thus, while we might be inclined to view such acts of destruction as somewhat barbaric or riotous, for many of the common citizens carrying out the acts, or those watching, these associations are unlikely to have come to mind. The direct and recognised link between the violence in the arena and that seen during the destructive spectacle of *damnatio* should be further stressed here. The acclamations made by the senate against Commodus following his death imitate the kinds of chants used in the gladiatorial games, for instance.<sup>369</sup> Furthermore, the language used in the ancient accounts of his condemnation often employ the sort of language used in the arena, concerning the disposal and abuse of the corpses of the *noxii*.<sup>370</sup> Even if we were to pass over these literary references, we can clearly draw a link between *damnatio memoriae* and violence in the arena, simply via the common features of public violence accompanied by a simultaneously jovial and bloodthirsty crowd. Therefore we can read *damnatio*, to some extent, as an allegory of an arena spectacle, with the difference being that the crowd is directly participating in the violence. We can therefore examine moral attitudes towards violence in the arena and extrapolate from them the likely moral responses to the destruction that occurred during the spectacle. In the arena, the killing of a gladiator, or a condemned criminal, would not have been seen as inherently cruel, but the sympathy would rather be proportional to the sufferer's degree of moral status (this being gleaned from his performance in the arena in the gladiator's case).<sup>371</sup> The destruction of the emperor's statues, as a sort of murder by proxy, would thus not be seen as immoral, as the immoral behaviour of the tyrant would have

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<sup>365</sup> Juv. *Sat.* 10.69-74 (Index 6).

<sup>366</sup> Pliny *Ep.* 9.13.2; Above, p.55.

<sup>367</sup> Coleman (1990) p.47.

<sup>368</sup> Barton, C.A. (1992) p.61-62; Wistrand (1992) p.17-29; Lintott (1999) p.40-41; Futrell (1997) p.48-50.

<sup>369</sup> Toner (2014) p.31.

<sup>370</sup> Kyle (1998) p.224-8; Varner (2004) p.137.

<sup>371</sup> Bergmann, B.A. (1999) p.21; Barton, C.A. (1992) p.23-25; Edmondson (1996) p.81-2, 96-7; Futrell (1997) p.49.

made him unworthy of sympathy.<sup>372</sup> In fact, this association could mean that the very choice to 'kill' the tyrant would have been, in itself, an act of condemning him as immoral.

Another significant manifestation of public violence in Roman culture is that of the popular violence of republican Rome.<sup>373</sup> Lintott's extensive treatment of this subject reveals the myriad positive associations that violence committed by the *populus* in public spaces had.<sup>374</sup> As Lintott states, 'Private force was recognised throughout the republic as a proper means of securing redress for certain kinds of wrong'.<sup>375</sup> Most critically, however, was that one of the supreme justifications for violence on the part of the *populus* was in acting against a tyrant.<sup>376</sup> Rome's foundational tradition of tyrannicide heavily influenced discourse on violence, as Lintott points out, with Cicero often having referred to the killings and executions of past tyrannical individuals to justify the elimination of his own political opponents.<sup>377</sup> These positive associations would certainly have been present in the Roman cultural memory in the imperial period, despite a decline in the manifestation of these moral inclinations since the end of the republic, as they were surrounded by the statues of the *exempla* who had utilised it successfully, or been threatened by it.<sup>378</sup> It has already been mentioned how attacking the statue of an emperor makes use of the statue as a proxy for the emperor's body. Thus, these attacks could have evoked memories of the positive republican associations with tyrannicide, and the moral duty to carry it out, so that the citizens participating in the destruction of the statues of the tyrant would have felt as if they were doing a public good.

The philosophical and moral associations of a jubilant and violent spectacle should also be considered here. Barton, discussing the celebration of violence in the arena and its relationship with the concept of the immoral 'tyrant', notes that Seneca proclaims the *Saturnalia* as a release from Claudius, the Saturnalian *princeps*.<sup>379</sup> In a similar way, an act of violence could be seen as a release from the oppression of a violent *princeps*.<sup>380</sup> Additionally, one should consider the contrast between the attitude of those living under a tyrant to the tyrant himself. Barton goes on to say that the proximity of a tyrant requires austerity, as

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<sup>372</sup> Lintott (1999) p.54-58; Bergmann, B.A. (1999) p.21.

<sup>373</sup> Lintott (1999) p.6-21; Nippel (2003) p.49-50; Futrell (1997) p.3, 10.

<sup>374</sup> Lintott (1999); Nippel (2003) p.51-7.

<sup>375</sup> Lintott (1999) p.66. This is even true from a legal angle, as in Cicero's defense of the killing of Clodius by Milo – Lintott (1999) p.22-24; Russell (2016) p.35-7.

<sup>376</sup> Lintott (1999) p.54-8.

<sup>377</sup> See Lintott (1999) p.55.

<sup>378</sup> Besides the foundational importance of figures like Lucius Junius Brutus and Gaius Servilius Ahala, perhaps the best example of an *exemplum* who embodied this moral view in the cultural memory would have been Augustus, who invoked the rhetoric of tyrannicide in the beginning of his *Res Gestae* when discussing the civil wars - *per quem rem publicam dominatione factionis oppressam in libertatem vindicavi* – *RGDA*.1.1.

<sup>379</sup> Barton, C.A. (1992) p.76; Sen. *Apocol.* 8.

<sup>380</sup> Gregory (1994) p.95. See also Futrell (1997) p.48 for violence as a 'release valve'.

expression becomes dangerous, and so an austere, perhaps more objectively moral in the Roman mind, response would not have felt like a release.<sup>381</sup> 'As a result, the expression of passion, of emotion, of anger, of suffering, could be seen as liberation from the constraint of rejoicing – and thus from the arbitrary and tyrannical license of the more powerful...The abandonment to passion becomes a form of resistance to tyranny'.<sup>382</sup> Barton is talking about the spectacles in the arena, but the spectacle of *damnatio* could serve the same purpose, and its immediacy would have made the psychological connection even clearer. This brief act of violence and 'abandonment to passion' would also be justifiable in its purpose, as it is meant to bring about a restoration of Roman austerity in the long term.<sup>383</sup>

Thus, the celebratory atmosphere of the spectacle would probably have had the effect of drawing in participants or 'revellers' beyond the base of the tyrant's detractors, and this effect would not have been diminished or hindered by contemporary moral attitudes; rather, the positive moral associations with these forms of violence may have further contributed to it. The consequent inflation of the crowd of participants is enormously important. Firstly, it intensifies the liminal nature of the destruction. The participants or witnesses would not only have felt the effect of the event as eliminating the positive associations of the previous emperor, and replacing them with the positive associations of his death. They could also have been witnessing that this process had already taken place in the majority of their peers and countrymen, as all these people participated in this upheaval.<sup>384</sup> If we consider the ultimate consequence of the *damnatio memoriae* of emperors in this period to be the creation of a new negative *exemplum* to be entered into the Roman cultural memory, then to many of those witnessing or participating in these acts of destruction it would perhaps have seemed that this process had already been completed, and the scenes of destruction were merely confirming his permanent and irreversible condemnation by Roman society. Furthermore, the supporters of Domitian, those who had benefited from his rule in some way, would interpret this apparent universal condemnation in a different way. Kinney, discussing the use of spoliated materials under Diocletian, could provide an analogy for this feeling – 'Viewers holding to

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<sup>381</sup> Barton, C.A. (1992) p.77.

<sup>382</sup> Barton, C.A. (1992) p.77.

<sup>383</sup> Barton mentions that there are potentially two ways of looking at violence in the Roman mind; as breaking the moral code, or restoring it. *Damnatio* would definitely have been seen as the latter – Barton, C.A. (1992) p.78.

<sup>384</sup> This effect would have been even stronger in the Roman mind, as the conceptualisation of the *populus* was that of an indivisible and united group, and a divided *populus* was considered a threat to society, and a portent of possible civil war – Russell (2019) p.47-50. Though these associations would have been weaker in the Imperial period as the memory of politically-driven civil wars faded from the social memory, these feelings would likely have still been present in the cultural memory, embodied by republican *exempla*, and so a natural inclination towards a consensus among the Roman people would still have been present, I would argue.

more traditional standards, however, would have seen otherwise; to them the *spolia* might have been indices of breakdown, breakdown of the city and possibly of the social order that had built and once maintained it'.<sup>385</sup> It might seem to the supporters of Domitian's regime, the order with which they had lived for fifteen years, that the society they had helped create was being broken down around them, in such a way that it would dampen any desire within them to restore Domitian's memory. We have already seen how a number of images of Domitian, and most of his surviving inscriptions, survived in private contexts, apparently rescued from destruction by loyal supporters.<sup>386</sup> In this setting, these few survivors may have simply served to amplify the sense of repression felt by his supporters, as the contrast between their support of Domitian and his condemnation by Roman society at large would be even more apparent.

Furthermore, one ought to consider the associations of such a spectacle of violence itself. Roman culture was intimately familiar with mass violence, and the witnessing of such. The violence seen in the amphitheatre and the mob violence of republican Rome are two examples of this, and both, I would argue, would influence how the spectacle of *damnatio* would be interpreted. Crucially, these interpretations would go on to have significant consequences for the memory of the man who was the target of this destruction. Firstly, we ought to return to the gladiatorial games and other violent spectacles in the arena. We have already discussed how the violent spectacle of destruction can be viewed as an allegory of a gladiatorial show, and the moral associations of the violence it put on display. If it is examined in this way, there are a number of direct associations that can be made. Firstly, the political implications of this comparison are important. If this was a gladiatorial show, then an *editor* would be required. This was almost always the emperor in imperial Rome; it could easily be said that the emperor acted as *editor* for the 'game' of *damnatio*, as the leader of the regime that had condemned the predecessor.<sup>387</sup> This would also have made the condemnation of the predecessor's memory equivalent to the call to kill a gladiator in the arena.<sup>388</sup> This certainly would have had powerful implications for the condemnation of Commodus, specifically condemned for his pretensions as a gladiator during his lifetime.<sup>389</sup> There is also the fact that the gladiatorial games acted as one of the limited opportunities for the citizens to express their views; indeed, the audience influencing the emperor's decision to kill or spare the defeated gladiator is described by Edwards as 'persuasive demonstrations of the degree to which

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<sup>385</sup> Kinney (1997) p.146.

<sup>386</sup> Grainger (2003) p.51-52.

<sup>387</sup> Coleman (1990) p.48-49; Edwards (2007) p.53.

<sup>388</sup> See Edwards (2007) p.57-8.

<sup>389</sup> Potter (2004) p.85.

emperor and people were at one'.<sup>390</sup> This direct association of political expression and public violence had ingrained itself into the minds of the citizens of Rome. The public destruction of the statues of the tyrant would thus be less likely to be interpreted as meaningless, but would perhaps be thought of as an act of political expression against tyranny, or in support of the new emperor.<sup>391</sup>

The close comparison that can be made with the aforementioned mob violence of republican Rome would also have had consequences for the interpretation of the spectacle. This association would have also served as another reversal – almost without exception, the emperors considered to be tyrants in Roman discourse are depicted as anti-senatorial, and thus anti-republican. A display of popular violence, distinctly reminiscent of those which had occurred under the republic, could have been seen as a powerful symbol of the resurgence of the power of the Roman people, thus deepening this association between the deposed tyrant and autocracy.

We have already encountered in Pliny and the *Historia Augusta* the concept of violence against statues as a proxy for violence against the emperor himself, or against his corpse. This is, of course, critical to understanding how *damnatio* was perceived, and Varner wrote extensively on this subject in an article in 2001.<sup>392</sup> Something that is less often considered, however, are the particulars of this surrogate corpse abuse. If *damnatio* was seen as a proxy for execution, or as *poena post mortem*, then it is worth examining the particular types of execution or corpse abuse it was imitating. We know of two ways at least in which this was manifested. Firstly, we know at least one statue of Domitian, a miniature bronze, which was found in the Tiber.<sup>393</sup> There are numerous examples of bronze statues of emperors which have been discovered in the Tiber like this, with Stewart suggesting that they 'may have been thrown there during disturbances'.<sup>394</sup> This has potential associations with methods of execution as well as those of *poena post mortem*. Throwing Domitian into the Tiber could have been an attempt to re-enact the *poena cullei*, a punishment for parricide, in which the accused was thrown into the Tiber in a sack along with an assortment of animals. Considering that Domitian was accused of being implicated in the death of his brother Titus, it is not difficult to imagine that, in the chaos following his downfall, this would have been extended to him

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<sup>390</sup> Edmondson (1996) p.98-101, 109-111. See also Futrell (1997) p.47; Edwards (2007) p.54; Flaig (2010) p.281-2; Flaig (2015) p.89-90.

<sup>391</sup> See Varner (2001a) p.60.

<sup>392</sup> Varner (2001a). See also Bats (2003) p.293-5.

<sup>393</sup> Southern (1997) VI, pl.9; Varner (2004) p.130.

<sup>394</sup> Stewart (2003) p.276; Varner (2000b) p.45; Varner (2004) p.72 Varner (2012) p.130. 'Close to half of bronze statuettes of Caligula known today are from the Tiber, giving us some indication of the scale of the practice.' – Kristensen (2015) p.671; see also Pollini (2006) p.593.

plotting against his father Vespasian as well.<sup>395</sup> The most likely reason to deposit a statue of the emperor in the Tiber, however, would be as a recreation of the typical *poena post mortem* for capital offenders.<sup>396</sup> This posthumous disgrace, in fact, is recorded by the *Historia Augusta* as being specifically demanded for Commodus.<sup>397</sup> It seems likely that, as the statues were used as stand-ins for directly harming the hated emperor, they would also have been used to simulate specific *poenae post mortem* when the opportunity to carry them out on the tyrant's physical corpse was denied.

The second of these would be *vivicombarium*, a punishment for arson and treachery that involved being beaten, bound and burned alive.<sup>398</sup> The public melting down of the statues of Domitian could have been seen in this light – they were beaten as they were violently torn down, bound as they were transported to the flames, and then 'burned alive' as they were melted down. Each of these elements are described by Pliny as taking place during the *damnatio* of Domitian.<sup>399</sup> This punishment was usually reserved for slaves and people of lower orders, perhaps making it even more humiliating.<sup>400</sup> The 'treachery' could have referred to his treachery against his brother, or more generally, treachery against the *patria*.

When considering the destruction or mutilation of statues as using the image as a proxy for the emperor, or his corpse, one possible parallel that comes to mind immediately are the so called 'Fatal Charades' in which an execution was presented as an enactment of a scene from mythology.<sup>401</sup> While it is difficult to draw a direct comparison between *damnatio* and the 'Fatal Charade',<sup>402</sup> there is one key element that brings together these executions, the combat in the arena and the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* – the merging of death with theatre.<sup>403</sup> Bartsch calls to attention the way that the death of Vitellius is described by Tacitus, saying that it is treated like 'death theatre', in which the execution is described as being cheered by the

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<sup>395</sup> Phil. VA. 6.32; Suet. *Dom.* 6.3; Dio 66.26.2. Varner suggests that it could also be connected to the ritual of the *Sacra Argeorum* in which human effigies were thrown into the Tiber in a symbolic purification of the city – Varner (2012) p.130. See also Pollini (2006) p.593.

<sup>396</sup> Varner (2004) p.137.

<sup>397</sup> SHA *Comm.* 17.1.

<sup>398</sup> Kyle (1998) p.53. See also the *damnatio ad flammas*, the method of public execution seen in the arena – Wiedemann (1992) p.79-82.

<sup>399</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 52.3-5 (Index 5).

<sup>400</sup> Kyle (1998) p.53.

<sup>401</sup> See Coleman (1990); Welch (2002) p.132-3.

<sup>402</sup> The fact that such an execution would not have involved 'audience participation' and would have certainly been an organised affair presented to the people is one immediate difference. Additionally, while *damnatio* seems to have utilised effigies as a proxy for the body of the condemned, 'Fatal Charades' use a condemned criminal in place of a mythological character. It would certainly seem that these 'charades' are more about the execution than the story used to 'dress it up', and so the entire effect of using a proxy is lost.

<sup>403</sup> Bartsch (1994) p.55-56.

witnesses who were supporting him only a few days before.<sup>404</sup> The calls for Otho's execution in the reign of Galba are similarly described – *ut si in circo aut theatro ludicrum aliquod postularent* (as if they were asking for some show in the circus or the theatre).<sup>405</sup> Bartsch states that 'as Fatal Charades are theatre merging with death, this is death merging with theatre', and suggests that since both Plutarch and Tacitus were writing at the same time, they were perhaps drawing from an established literary tradition.<sup>406</sup> Since they were both writing in the early second century, however, it is possible that these descriptions drew from their own experiences with how people reacted to the death of Domitian, and their cynicism regarding the duplicity of the mob is drawn from the contrast between the praise and quasi-worship of Domitian during his lifetime, and his violent condemnation after his death.<sup>407</sup> Regardless, these scenes demonstrate the willingness in the Roman mind to see death as a 'show', and so in viewing *damnatio* as a proxy for death or mutilation, we should perhaps see it as a form of entertainment similar to the arena spectacles or the 'Fatal Charades'.

Direct parallels such as these between punishments for particular crimes and the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* are, of course, very significant for the recreation of the condemned tyrant's identity. Not only do they serve to publicise the downfall and condemnation of the fallen emperor further, thus ending the promotion of his intended identity, they also, crucially, serve to condemn specific aspects of his character via the medium of a public ritual. Thus, they create memory figures that form part of the condemned's new identity as a tyrant.

## Conclusion

The case of Domitian, as well as that of Commodus, provides valuable insights into the somewhat undervalued spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, not only with regard to how it occurred and what it looked like, but also in how it was interpreted by the general populace. As is hinted at by references in the sources and the archaeological evidence, especially in the later period, the authorities, while they evidently did not stringently organise the destruction in a systematic fashion, provided the initial 'spark' to begin the pseudo-spontaneous scenes of popular destruction, which then spread organically throughout the city. These findings agree with Stewart's previous analysis, and that of social psychologists. We can also say, with reasonable confidence, how it was carried out by these people. The statue was dragged down,

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<sup>404</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.84-5; Bartsch (1994) p.55; Aldrete (1999) p.132.

<sup>405</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 1.32.1; Bartsch (1994) p.55. See also Plutarch's account of the death of Galba, which reports the theatrical behaviour of the soldiers after they murdered him – Plut. *Vit. Galb.* 27.3.

<sup>406</sup> Bartsch (1994) p.56.

<sup>407</sup> Tacitus would have been in Rome at the time, and Plutarch had witnessed the Dionysia at Athens that occurred shortly after Domitian's death – see Plut. *Moralia* 828; above, p.58.



most likely forwards. This was then followed by the face being attacked and destroyed. This process is demonstrated by the ancient sources, both textual and visual, as well as by modern incarnations of cultural repression, which demonstrate that this method is nearly universal. Inscriptions could also, despite their erasure presenting an increased challenge over the toppling of statues, play a role in the spectacle, as more temporary forms of erasure could be employed. Coins, too, offered unique opportunities for individual creativity and widespread dissemination which portraits and inscriptions could not have, and their ubiquity guaranteed that all had an opportunity to degrade the images of the condemned tyrant.

These findings also affect the most important consequence of this event for this study – the interpretations of those who were present to witness the destruction, or had participated in it themselves. Most obviously, it was a liminal event, as it marked the change of regime from the old to the new, and invited people, therefore, to draw comparisons between the tyrant and the successor. Its joyful nature ensures that this is a celebratory transition, thus creating positive associations with the successor and negative associations with the predecessor. This, and the positive moral connotations of the violent act in Roman society, would also have drawn more people into participating in the destruction, engendering support for the new regime and hatred for the tyrant within their minds. This visible inflation of the support for the new regime would also have intimidated the supporters of Domitian and Commodus, potentially suppressing voices that would dissent from the narrative of the predecessor being a tyrant. The particular way in which Roman society treated violence is significant as well, not only for the positive moral and political associations of the violence that citizens were exposed to during the gladiatorial games, and the entertainment involved in the ‘fatal charades’, but also for the direct comparisons that can be made between the physical abuse of the statues and the abuse of the corpses of condemned prisoners. Such spectacles would also call back to the republican scenes of popular violence which, combined with the political associations of arena spectacles, would have created a link between the violence of *damnatio* and the free expression of political opinion among the Roman ‘mob’. Lastly, the recycling of materials from the melting down of statues, discussed in more detail in the following chapter, has significant symbolic implications as well, providing a material representation of the transformation of Roman society under the leadership of the new emperor, something which is celebrated in our sources for Domitian.

As discussed earlier, statues and other physical anchors for memory figures not only look forward to a future where they would serve to commemorate now historical actions, despite this being the most obviously recognised purpose. They also serve an immediate purpose of promoting these actions to those contemporary with its construction, through

simple increased awareness within the memory of individuals as well as creating a façade of presumed future exemplarity. Likewise, the destruction of this physical legacy aims to reverse this trend and create a negative *exemplum* out of the figure, under the guise of forgetting them entirely. Furthermore, it has an immediate purpose, of turning the contemporary collective consciousness against the condemned, achieved through publicly visible denunciation of their work by means of the destruction of their statues. This both serves to promote the idea of a consensus against them, thus serving to create one where none may have previously existed, as well as condemning them by presuming that their memory can be absolutely condemned, or even destroyed. This effect would have been even stronger before a strong precedent for rehabilitation was made, as, when studied purely from past examples, there was no reason to believe that the infamy would not be permanent and irreversible. In addition, because monuments put forward a purely positive image of someone, a lack of monuments for someone whose name all would have recognised would inherently imply their infamy, certainly in the case of emperors. This spectacle, then is extraordinarily important. By publicising his condemnation, it announced that his intended positive identity had been rejected by both the new regime and the people at large. Thus, with the effective destruction of his positive identity (as the monuments to it were literally removed from the city), the spectacle allowed the process of the reinvention of the condemned emperor's identity to begin.

Furthermore, this destruction could also have more long-term consequences for the memory of the condemned. As Varner suggests, the array of 'anti-monuments' created by this process would act as a negative *exemplum* for tyranny and the support thereof.<sup>408</sup> To go further, the initial act of destruction would also interact with and intensify existing political grievances shared by many of the perpetrators of the destruction itself. This closely reflects the purpose of the construction of the material which is attacked during *damnatio*. If we compare the spectacle of destruction to the creation of the Roman memory space, more parallels emerge. Statues and other monuments served as anchors for memory figures, providing the reference to a specific time and place which the creation of a memory figure requires. The trauma of an event such as the destruction of *damnatio memoriae* would also create new anchors for memory figures associated with his condemnation, allowing this event to influence what the tyrant represents in the Roman cultural memory, long into the future.

We have seen that certain aspects of the spectacle lend themselves to the creation of parts of the condemned tyrant's new identity. For instance, the visual references to the popular violence of republican Rome would imply that the individual whom this violence

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<sup>408</sup> Varner (2004) p.8-9.

targeted was anti-republican. The similarities between the abuse of statues and *poena post mortem*, meanwhile, would imply that the tyrant was guilty of the crimes for which these *poenae* would normally be assigned. Yet on the whole, the nature of the spectacle as being widespread and all-encompassing makes its role as establishing the specific new identity of the tyrant a difficult one. However, if we are to look at specific individual instances of destruction, we can see a much more targeted and concentrated approach to this recreation.

## Chapter 2: The destruction of individually significant monuments of Domitian

### Turning virtue into vice

Clearly, the en masse spectacle was critical in the transformation of the identity of the condemned emperor, from all-but-deified paragon to an avatar of Roman vice and the abuse of power. However, while it very clearly rejects the former image of the emperor, this broad approach can only achieve limited success in establishing a new character for the condemned individual. Thus, in addition to considering the more particular connotations of the wider 'display' of *damnatio*, we also ought to examine the impact of the destruction of particular objects. Since we have discussed extensively already how his *damnatio* was carried out, I will again be using the case study of Domitian to demonstrate this. As each image has different ideological associations, which depend on spatial and iconographical context, attributes, and even size, the destruction of each statue would also have ideological effects that would be particular to each image.

This aspect of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* is not something that has been covered at all in existing scholarship, but it is crucial for understanding the consequences of this destructive event. This is particularly true if we are to consider *damnatio memoriae* as a reversal of the process of exemplarity. Roller established that one of the key components of exemplarity in Roman culture are the monuments, a term which he uses to refer to written and oral narratives as well as physical monuments – anything which is used to commemorate the 'deed' for which the *exemplum* is famous.<sup>409</sup> Roller uses the example of the *pons Sublicius* as a physical monument which celebrates Horatius Cocles' heroic defence of the crossing, a direct reminder of the particular deed which made Horatius' name.<sup>410</sup> However, monuments do not need to be so directly connected with an individual act to be used in this way. As Roller states, 'even nonnarrative monumental forms explicitly refer to, or implicitly require, a narrative that accounts for their occasion'.<sup>411</sup> Thus a physical monument which commemorates a virtue that the *exemplum*-to-be wishes to signal could bring to mind more specific acts or deeds which prove this virtue, even if they are not referred to directly on the monument

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<sup>409</sup> Roller (2004) p.5; Roller (2018) p.6-7.

<sup>410</sup> Roller (2004) p.11-12.

<sup>411</sup> Roller (2004) p.10. See also Langlands (2018) p.29-31.

itself.<sup>412</sup> Roller also discusses the creation of a monument as not only disseminating the knowledge of the deed, but also as disseminating the positive judgement of the 'primary audience' of direct witnesses.<sup>413</sup> This is, ostensibly, the reason for the construction of a physical monument – to commemorate and thus reward positive actions. The destruction of the monument would be a condemnation of this commemoration, and a denial of the positive judgement of the primary audience by a secondary audience. Furthermore, as the act creates a new 'monument' for the hatred of the tyrant and his new negative persona, as has been discussed previously, this would be tightly connected to the nature of the original monument destroyed. This would then be connected with other textual or oral narratives which seek to memorialize his vices or failures, in particular those narratives which concern the aspects of his character related to that of the original monument. Destruction of these monuments would thus not only be a rejection of the virtues that they were intended to broadcast, but also an assertion of the tyrant's antithetical vices relative to those virtues. For instance, the destruction of a monument which celebrated an individual's martial prowess or military leadership may have become an effective assertion of his cowardice and incompetence in military matters in the context of oral and written discourse to that effect.

One reason that has not been looked at thus far, potentially, is the nature of evidence. Not only are we asking for evidence of something which was destroyed, a problem which was encountered in the previous chapter, we are also asking for **particular** statues – ones that are mentioned in the sources – that have been destroyed. These statues that are mentioned in texts are the only ones that we can be sure had singular significance, since the intended display locations of many of the archaeologically attested statues which were subject to mutilation or destruction from Rome are extremely hard to discern, and thus few conclusions can be drawn about those who witnessed or took part in their destruction. For these reasons, we cannot afford to be too discriminating about the case studies we choose. Fortunately, Domitian's case is unusually rich in evidence of this kind. There are two excellent examples of statues which were well-enough known to have been specifically mentioned by multiple sources, and for which we have some, albeit limited, archaeological evidence. These two monuments are the famous *Equus Domitiani*, Domitian's colossal equestrian statue in the *Forum Romanum*, and the cult statue of the Temple of Jupiter Custos. Both of these statues have very particular connotations with regards to Domitian's character, and their destruction is likely to have been very effective in reversing these connotations. For Commodus, our

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<sup>412</sup> For example, D'Ambra argues that Domitian's traditionalist attitude to coinage can be brought to mind by the promotion of traditional values in the Arachne frieze of the *Forum Transitorium* – D'Ambra (1993) p.58.

<sup>413</sup> Roller (2004) p.5; Roller (2018) p.6, 8.

evidence is much more typical; for any statue of his that is specifically mentioned in the sources, we have no archaeological evidence whatsoever. For this reason, I will only briefly discuss a statue of him as an archer in the *Forum Romanum* as comparandum for the Domitianic examples. This statue, though only mentioned in the sources and not attested to archaeologically, could be interpreted as having similarly anti-senatorial connotations to the *Equus Domitiani*, so its destruction would have sent an equally clear message. The full history of another powerful example of this effect, the *Colossus Neronis*, will be discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

I will also explore some less famous examples of statues which are mentioned fleetingly in the sources, in order to examine the consequences of their destruction for the identity of the tyrant. These images, often mentioned only because they are closely associated to a specific event, became the anchors of memory figures associated with that event. As such, their destruction, I argue, would act as a condemnation of the aspect of his personality which that statue, and that event, had come to represent.

### The *Equus Domitiani*

One particularly powerful example of the destruction of an individual statue is Domitian's colossal bronze equestrian statue in the forum, the *Equus Domitiani*. Due to its description by Statius in the first poem of his *Silvae* (Index 8), this statue remains well known today.<sup>414</sup> The *Equus Domitiani* became a symbol of Domitian's divinity, and thus a target for praise by proxy, and the fact that it is the only individual statue of Domitian commemorated in this way demonstrates its singular significance.<sup>415</sup> The nuances of the description given by Statius are important not only for establishing what the statue looked like, but also what it represented in the positive narrative of Domitian's reign – the specifics of which we will return to below. For now it will suffice to examine the practical aspects of Statius' description, the details of which are corroborated by numismatic evidence for the appearance of the statue (Fig.19).<sup>416</sup> Statius describes the *Equus* facing east and featuring Domitian in military dress, riding a horse in a 'striding' pose, with its hoof treading on the hair of the captive Rhine.<sup>417</sup> Both of Domitian's arms were outstretched – his right 'bids battles cease' while in his left stood a statuette of

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<sup>414</sup> Statius *Silv.* I.1 (Index 8).

<sup>415</sup> Darwall-Smith (1996) p.232. As with all Statius' work concerning Domitian, there is debate as to whether he attempted to conceal criticism of the emperor within the description of the *Equus Domitiani*. Since the truth of this is impossible to determine, I will only be referring to such theories when they demonstrate how the statue might be interpreted by an independent observer – Ahl (1984) p.92-97.

<sup>416</sup> *RIC* II.1 Domitian, no.797; *BMCRE* II, no.476+; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.228-229; Newlands (2002) p.46-48.

<sup>417</sup> Statius *Silv.* I.1.50-51, 22-31 (Index 8) – if the statue faced the temple of Divus Julius, then it must have been east-facing; Richardson (1992) p.144.

Minerva holding aloft the *aegis*.<sup>418</sup> Statius clearly recognises the value of the context of the statue, mentioning, among others, the republican *basilicae* that flanked the statue, the temples of Vesta, Concord and Divus Julius.<sup>419</sup> He calls particular attention to Domitian's contributions to the landscape – for example, the Temple of Vespasian and Titus and the Palatine palace, visible from the forum.<sup>420</sup> Statius gives the impression of a transformed, Domitianic forum, with the *Equus* as the unifying centrepiece - describing it in the second line as 'embracing' ('*complexa*') the *Forum Romanum*.<sup>421</sup> It can be safely assumed that the statue itself was destroyed and melted down after Domitian's death.<sup>422</sup>

Considering the complexities involving the archaeological evidence for the statue, it is worth looking at it in detail. Up until recently, the commonly accepted location of the statue was that which was proposed by Boni following his excavations in 1903 (Fig.20, nr.19).<sup>423</sup> Boni's argument was that this location appeared to match the description provided by Statius, as it is located in the centre of the Forum, is adjacent to the *Lacus Curtius*, and is aligned so that it can face towards the temple of Divus Julius. In addition, three travertine blocks were embedded into the concrete foundations, each with holes in the centre. Boni suggested that these travertine blocks were there as receptacles for vertical metal poles which supported the *Equus Domitiani*, and that these would have aligned with the three hooves which would have touched the base directly (excluding that which was placed atop the figure of the Rhine).<sup>424</sup> He also implies that the area above this base was left unpaved following the destruction of the monument, and that this indicates that the area was left unused, as a *locus funestus*.<sup>425</sup> Much more recently, however, Cairoli Giuliani and Patrizia Verduchi have revealed further evidence, and reinterpreted that which Boni uncovered, to exclude this as the correct location. Firstly, they suggest that the fixing holes, as identified by Boni, would have been unsuitable for the holding of vertical poles strong enough to support a colossal bronze statue. Rather, they are of appropriate size for the 'antennae' of the type used for the erection of trophies during a triumph.<sup>426</sup> They also call into question why the fourth hoof would lack a support rod if it was

<sup>418</sup> Statius *Silv.* I.1.37-9 (Index 8).

<sup>419</sup> Darwall-Smith (1996) p.228.

<sup>420</sup> Statius *Silv.* I.1 (Index 8), throughout, but especially 22-31; for commentary on this arrangement, see Richardson (1992) p.144-5; Jones, B. (1992) p.85; Giuliani (1995) p.228-229.

<sup>421</sup> Statius *Silv.* I.1.2 (Index 8). Ahl (1984) p.92; See also Thomas (2004) p.24.

<sup>422</sup> Lugli (1947) p.105-7.

<sup>423</sup> Boni (1904) p.574-77; Boni's *cartelle* no.8 & 23 in the archives of the Soprintendenza Archeologia di Roma, as cited by Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) p.122. See also the letter titled 'Excavations in Rome' from Sir Henry Stuart Jones to the *Times* newspaper, as published in its 19<sup>th</sup> November 1903 edition, p.15.

<sup>424</sup> Boni (1904) p.574-5. This suggestion is discussed by many subsequent scholars: Lugli (1947) p.103-5; Hammond (1953) p.176; Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.34-36; Richardson (1992) p.144-145; Jones, B. (1992) p.85; Giuliani (1995) p.228-229; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.229-30; Thomas (2004) p.21, 28-29.

<sup>425</sup> Boni (1904) p.576; Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.37.

<sup>426</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.37.

necessary for the others – although this, foremost, hoof is raised above the others, it would have still been connected to the statue base via the representation of the Rhine.<sup>427</sup> Secondly, they disagree with the claim that the area was left unpaved after the monument was demolished. To prove this, they simply recall the notes of the excavator, which clearly state that travertine slabs were removed in order to uncover Boni's proposed base.<sup>428</sup> Lastly, Giuliani and Verduchi query the dating of the base. Another monument, nr.18, which partially covers nr.19, was partly destroyed during Boni's excavations in order to reveal one of the travertine blocks mentioned earlier. However, enough traces remain of the *opus sectile* pavement in marble that we can assign it a Neronian date, and if nr.18 is indeed Neronian, then it provides a *terminus ante quem* for nr.19 which would exclude any relationship between it and Domitian.<sup>429</sup>

Giuliani and Verduchi instead propose an alternative identification for the *Equus* plinth. A rectangular area of pavement (nr.17) directly to the North of Boni's proposal is clearly distinct from the pavement surrounding it, as indicated both by its lack of metal clamps, and the arrangement of the blocks.<sup>430</sup> This area of paving corresponds exactly with a lower mass of concrete, embedded into the Augustan pavement.<sup>431</sup> This location fits equally well with Statius' description of the statue's surroundings, and they suggest that this, along with its slightly larger dimensions (7.8m wide and 12.2m long) than nr.19 means that this is more likely to be the location of the base of the *Equus*, and that the surrounding pavestones were made to approach the monument which was only later destroyed.<sup>432</sup> Finally, Giuliani and Verduchi note that, since the surrounding pavement cannot be older than AD 203, and this pavement was clearly built as an approach to the statue, the plinth of the *Equus Domitiani* was still present during the restoration of the pavement in the Severan period.<sup>433</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi thus conclude that the base survived after 96 and was perhaps put to another use. They suggest that the Severan restoration of the pavement indicates that it was returned to its original purpose as a base of an equestrian statue during this period, perhaps bearing the '*Equus Severi*', described by Herodian simply as being 'in the centre of the forum'.<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>427</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.37.

<sup>428</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.38.

<sup>429</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.44. See Thomas (2004) p.21, 29 and Giuliani (1995) p.228 for a summary.

<sup>430</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.45; Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) p.118; Giuliani (1995) p.228-229, Coarelli (1999) p.83; Claridge (2010) p.91.

<sup>431</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) p.120; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.229-30.

<sup>432</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1980) p.45; Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) p.118-121.

<sup>433</sup> Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) p.122; Giuliani (1995) p.228-229; Thomas (2004) p.21.

<sup>434</sup> Giuliani (1995) p.229; Herodian 2.9.6; below, p.134.



Much more recently, Thomas has speculated that the statue may have been placed further west, towards the rostra, on the basis of the benefits to sightlines and associations that this positioning would offer (Fig.21).<sup>435</sup> Thomas suggests that a position further to the west would allow a direct sightline through the *Argiletum* to the *Forum Transitorium*, the importance of sightlines for the *Equus Domitiani* already having been highlighted by Torelli (Fig.22).<sup>436</sup> Thomas does not offer any archaeological evidence for this identification, however, stating that the Severan pavement and the presence of the column of Phocas would make any excavations difficult.<sup>437</sup> While he admits that this is purely speculative, he argues that the Giuliani-Verduchi proposal is also speculative.<sup>438</sup> While Thomas' proposal is worth considering, the current lack of any archaeological evidence (ie. a potential identification of the base) to join with his theoretical evidence means that we ought to favour Giuliani and Verduchi's identification.

The destruction of the statue would have been ideologically significant for a number of reasons. The *Forum Romanum* was, and still is, a place very closely associated with the republican history of Rome. This is not without reason – most of the monuments that surrounded the *Equus* have pre-Augustan origins, and it is the location of the *Curia*. Domitian's 'domination' of the forum, as promoted in Statius' *Silvae*, would have been seen as a manifestation of his anti-republican/senatorial character, and the *Equus Domitiani* was the centrepiece of this transformation of the forum.<sup>439</sup> Fearnley comments that the scale of the *Equus* was 'emblematic of the extent to which political power and propaganda manifests itself in Flavian Rome', an interpretation which the text of Statius *Silvae* certainly supports. Pliny, in his *Panegyricus*, states that the victims of Domitian's purges were led through the forum, and forced to shed their blood in honour of 'that grim statue of a brutal tyrant' (*saevissimi domini atrocissima effigies*).<sup>440</sup> This shows the *Equus* to be, to an even greater extent, an avatar of Domitian's oppression. Therefore, its destruction would have represented the senate reasserting itself, and its triumph over Domitian's tyranny. Furthermore, it may have been received as hailing the dawn of a 'renaissance' of republican *mores*, as brought about by Nerva – an emperor who was drawn from the Senate's own ranks, and whose verist image declares his respect for republican values. This effect would have been further strengthened by consideration of the statue's origins, having been dedicated to Domitian by the Senate in AD

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<sup>435</sup> Thomas (2004) p.32-43.

<sup>436</sup> Torelli (1987) p.575; Thomas (2004) p.33-40.

<sup>437</sup> Thomas (2004) p.42

<sup>438</sup> Thomas (2004) p.43

<sup>439</sup> Ahl (1984) p.92. See Frederick (2003) p.205-9, 219 for more on Domitian's 'anti-republicanism' in his material culture.

<sup>440</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 52.7 (Index 5).

91, in honour of the Emperor's campaigns in Germania.<sup>441</sup> The irony of the senate choosing to violently destroy that which they had used to celebrate Domitian would be obvious to any witnesses or participants.

The nature of our main textual source for the statue, Statius, could also provide us with some key insights into how the statue was read by its viewers. Firstly, the statue is treated as a symbol of Domitian's rule and as a way to praise him as divine by proxy, as mentioned earlier. Bright, in fact, infers that the statue itself becomes supernatural by its sheer size in Statius' description.<sup>442</sup> The destruction would thus represent 'the people' denying Domitian's divinity, by proxy. Rosati takes this idea further, saying that Statius' extensive description of the relationship of the statue with its surrounding context was meant as an allegory for Domitian's divinity – the statue is as superior to the rest of Rome as the Emperor is to his subjects.<sup>443</sup> This interpretation would thus be reversed when the statue was pulled down during Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*, with Domitian as inferior to Rome and its citizens. Newlands interprets Statius as implying that the statue embodied the 'ideas, hopes and anxieties' of the Senate and people about Domitian's rule simultaneously, with all these interpretations being intended.<sup>444</sup> When the statue was destroyed, it could be said that the 'anxiety' interpretation of the statue is effectively proved to have been the correct one, and the destruction of the statue itself would be a condemnation of those who had approached Domitian with 'hope'. The continuing existence and knowledge of Statius' poem about the statue would have made these retrospective reassessments more likely during and after the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian. Similarly, the dedication of the statue to Domitian by the senate could be interpreted as a quasi-'vow' to the emperor. When Domitian failed to live up to their expectations of a good *princeps*, and thus failed to fulfil his part of the vow, the senate annulled their gift to him through the destruction of the statue.

Statius' description can also lend a certain sense of irony to the destruction of the statue. The most obvious example of this is when he has Marcus Curtius declare that 'It shall endure as long as do earth and heavens, as long as the Roman era shall'.<sup>445</sup> The irony here would be self-evident upon the statue's destruction, and would perhaps have been interpreted as poetic justice for Domitian's hubris.<sup>446</sup> Additionally, we know that a statuette of Minerva stood on Domitian's left hand, the *aegis* depicted on her shield.<sup>447</sup> Similar to the cult statue in

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<sup>441</sup> Stat. *Silv.* I.1.99-100 (Index 8); Jones, B. (1992) p.85; Richardson (1992) p.144.

<sup>442</sup> Darwall-Smith (1996) p.130-32; Bright (1980) p.43.

<sup>443</sup> Rosati (2006) p.42-3.

<sup>444</sup> Newlands (2002) p.49-50.

<sup>445</sup> Statius *Silv.* I.1.93-94 (Index 8).

<sup>446</sup> Thomas (2004) p.21 comments on this irony; Gibson (2006) p.170.

<sup>447</sup> Ahl (1984) p.94.

the *Templum* of Jupiter Custos,<sup>448</sup> there would be a sense of Domitian being abandoned by the gods that had once favoured him, Minerva being Domitian's patron goddess. One can imagine that this statuette, as it is depicted flat on the palm of the hand, may have been spared during the destruction of the statue much like the statue of Jupiter Custos. The depiction of the *aegis*, a symbol of protection, on her shield, further enforced this irony, as it showed that the statuette was acting as a 'protector of the Emperor', by Thomas' interpretation, and Hannestad argues that the raised right hand of Domitian represents his divine power and would have been considered a manifestation of his invincibility.<sup>449</sup>

Ahl proposes that the statue is inherently representative of Domitian's vainglory, and that therefore Statius drawing attention to it may have been an attempt to conceal criticism of Domitian within his work.<sup>450</sup> It is difficult, nigh impossible, to determine whether or not this was the true intent of Statius in writing *Silvae* 1.1. However, the fact that a compelling argument can be made that Statius drew attention to this statue in an attempt to make Domitian seem vainglorious is itself a powerful indicator of the statue's overtly dominating nature. Similarly, Ahl calls attention to a reference to the equestrian statue of Julius Caesar in Statius' poem, the head of which was originally Alexander the Great's.<sup>451</sup> Ahl says that this may have been another veiled critical message by Statius – that as Alexander's head could be easily swapped out, Domitian's could be too.<sup>452</sup> Again, even if Statius' did not intend to criticize by drawing comparison with the statue of Caesar, the awareness of this in the context of Domitian's statue would have made the *damnatio memoriae* of the *Equus* particularly poignant.

There are a few factors to be considered which could serve to amplify the above effects. Firstly, the statue itself was made of bronze. As discussed in the following chapter, the re-use of the statue's material in Nervan coinage, or other bronze objects, would be significant in the minds of the people.<sup>453</sup> In particular, as such a prominent symbol of Domitian's rule, this is the monument whose destruction would most likely have been remembered when people read these coins. The location of the statue outside the *Curia* is another factor worth considering. As mentioned earlier, Suetonius vividly describes the Senate immediately setting about destroying the images of Domitian found within the senate house.<sup>454</sup> If we are to assume that the destruction did not stop there, as is most reasonable, then the *Equus*

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<sup>448</sup> See below, p.109

<sup>449</sup> Thomas (2004) p.27; Hannestad (1988) p.139.

<sup>450</sup> Ahl (1984) p.93-94.

<sup>451</sup> Statius *Silv.* 1.1.85-87 (Index 8).

<sup>452</sup> Ahl (1984) p.99; Vout (2008) p.162-3.

<sup>453</sup> Below, p.135.

<sup>454</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 23.1 (Index 4).

*Domitiani*, being immediately outside the *Curia* and extremely prominent, would have been the next most obvious target. It is therefore probable that the senators themselves would have been involved in either damaging or destroying the statue. While such a large statue would require the use of heavy tools, it is possible that the senators could have done symbolic damage to the statue without the need for a full demolition (such as defacing the inscription). Alternatively, they could have recruited the assistance of people, such as those working to construct the nearby, and still-unfinished, *Forum Transitorium*. This would have been a very effective way to signal to the populace that Domitian was officially condemned, and to initiate the wider display of violence against Domitian's images, as was argued in the previous chapter. This is as a result of the prominence of the statue as emblematic of Domitian's reign, and the central position of the *Forum Romanum*. If it was indeed carried out by the senators themselves, or under their supervision, the pro-senatorial implications of the colossus' destruction would have been all the more powerful. In any case, it is very probable that it was one of the *damnatio*'s first victims, and as it had been a symbol for Domitian's reign, its destruction would be a symbol of his downfall.<sup>455</sup>

Finally, it is also possible that the destruction of the statue could have been seen as a condemnation of Domitian's building work, in a similar way to the *sacellum* of Jupiter Conservator. Statius describes in detail the public spectacle of the erection of the statue, going so far as to mention the 'constant' (*continuus*) noise of construction. The excessive noise of construction is something that was later condemned by Pliny the younger in his panegyric, and was another point in which Ahl claims Statius was attempting to criticize Domitian, saying: "If the noise was as loud as Statius says, the poem's first lines would have elicited a smothered laugh from his contemporaries".<sup>456</sup> This condemnation could be made even more potent when it is considered that the methods for destroying the colossal equestrian statue may have involved a large operation and the use of tools, given the sheer size of the object being removed. The destruction spectacle would thus resemble that of the construction described by Statius, and could be interpreted as a direct ironic reversal of the much-celebrated construction. Darwall-Smith suggests that this spectacle of the statue's construction enhanced the 'divinity' of the statue.<sup>457</sup> Thus, the reversal of this would further deny this divinity. In addition, Torelli proposes that the *Equus* was the 'fulcrum' of Domitian's building projects in

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<sup>455</sup> Darwall-Smith (1996) p.230; Varner (2004) p.113.

<sup>456</sup> Statius *Silv.* 1.1.60-65 (Index 8); Pliny *Pan.* 51.1 praises the lack of the roofs 'shuddering' (*quatiuntur*) as a result of huge stones being carried over them. Ahl (1984) p.97.

<sup>457</sup> Darwall-Smith (1996) p.231. Gibson, furthermore, argues compellingly that the description of the statue's construction reflects the building of Carthage in the Aeneid – Virg. *Aen.* 1.418-441; Gibson (2006) p.170. This may have foreshadowed the statue's destruction as a result – referencing the destruction of Carthage.

the city, due to clear sightlines between it and many of Domitian's most important works.<sup>458</sup> To take this metaphor further, the removal of a fulcrum causes a system to fail. At the very least, removing the image of Domitian from these sightlines would help remove his claim on the buildings linked to the *Equus* in this way, easing the future expropriation of his monuments in the city, as discussed in chapter 4.

A curious reference by Martial in *Epigram* 11.21 (Index 9) appears to confirm a number of these points.<sup>459</sup> This epigram is a *cumulatio* of comparisons for the especially loose vagina of Lydia, an otherwise unattested and likely fictional woman.<sup>460</sup> The first of these comparisons, forming the first line of the epigram, is of particular relevance here.

*Lydia tam laxa est equitis quam culus aeni,*

Lydia is as loose as the arse of a bronze horseman,<sup>461</sup>

This unusual comparison has, in the past, led to scholars believing that the script is corrupted, and proposing a correction of the interpretation of *equi* (horse) for *equitis* (horseman), or a different interpretation of *laxa*. In Izaac's case, in his 1961 edition of the text, he argues that *laxa* gives the phrase the sense of 'voluminous', so that the comparison makes more immediate sense.<sup>462</sup> Rodriguez-Almeida, however, noted that during the conservation of the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius (now in the Capitoline museums), it was discovered that the area of the buttocks which would have been attached to the horse was not cast, leaving a large hole.<sup>463</sup> He thus proposed that the 'bronze horseman' referenced is the *Equus Domitiani*, and that, since Martial likely wrote this particular book in late 96, it is more specifically referencing its destruction, during which the 'loose' rear end of Domitian would have been revealed.<sup>464</sup> I would add that it would have made political sense for Martial to make a subtly disparaging remark about Domitian, considering that he would have wished to compensate for his praise for the emperor during his reign, just as Pliny had with his *Panegyricus*.<sup>465</sup> Indeed, Book 10 had already been 'republished' to better suit the new regime, and Book 11 was the

<sup>458</sup> Torelli (1987) p.575, 579.

<sup>459</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 11.21 (Index 9).

<sup>460</sup> Rimell (2008) p.172; Soldevila *et al.* (2019) p.cxi.

<sup>461</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 11.21.1.

<sup>462</sup> Izaac (1961) p.125 n.3; Rodriguez-Almeida (1982-83) p.95-6. Kay (1985) p.114 'suspect[s] corruption', but does not refer to Rodriguez-Almeida's proposal (below), and was presumably simply unaware of it, writing so shortly after its publication – Nauta (2002) p.438 n.192.

<sup>463</sup> Rodriguez-Almeida (1982-83) p.96-7; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.230.

<sup>464</sup> Rodriguez-Almeida (1982-83) p.96-8. Shackleton Bailey (1993) p.21, Darwall-Smith (1996) p.230, and Nauta (2002) p.438 agree with his interpretation. Eden forwards the idea without specifically suggesting the *Equus Domitiani*, but does not reference Rodriguez-Almeida directly, perhaps coming up with the idea independently – Eden (1989) p.120; Obermayer (1998) p.184 n.179.

<sup>465</sup> Fearnley (2002) p.622-626. Sullivan (1991) p.46-47 – '[Book XI] signalled Martial's new, if guarded, loyalty', p.149-51; Rimell (2018) p.64-5; Roman (2001) p.192.

first book of Martial's work to be published following Domitian's downfall.<sup>466</sup> If Martial was to utilise a reference to Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* anywhere in his works, it would be here, when it is still strong in the neural and social memories of the city's inhabitants. Additionally, the city of Rome is a recurring subject in Martial's epigrams, especially the material culture of the city, with Martial's references often being oblique.<sup>467</sup> A very specific reference to a particular event concerning an especially famous landmark would thus not be out-of-place within his work. When this explanation for this difficult passage exists, and the estimated date of composition is late enough to allow for such a reference, it is no longer reasonable to assume that it is a corruption and correct it. Thus, it is only right to interpret *equitis aeni* as referring to the statue of Domitian riding the *Equus Domitiani*, and, more specifically, the circumstances of its destruction.

This choice of comparison is therefore much more important than it might appear, as it is key to understanding how the destruction of the statue was received by those in Rome at the time. The fact that people were reacting by making jokes is congruous with the portrayals of the jovial atmosphere of the *damnatio memoriae* spectacle, as discussed earlier. The fact that Martial expected people to understand the reference, perhaps months later, also means that the details of this particular event – the destruction of the *Equus Domitiani* – had entered the social memory. This memory would then continue to be associated with the place where the statue once stood, making comparisons between it and what later replaced it, discussed later in this thesis,<sup>468</sup> more likely. Rodriguez-Almeida also suggests that Martial's reference would have been inspired by a spontaneous comment, or chant, which had originally been made during the construction of the statue, and that the destruction spectacle simply replicated this scene.<sup>469</sup> If so, this adds further weight to the destruction being a reversal of the construction spectacle – Rodriguez-Almeida points out that Martial's comic comment contrasts heavily with the detailed and varied praise offered by Statius.<sup>470</sup> Much like the cult statue in the *Templum* of Jupiter Custos, the particular symbolic importance of the *Equus Domitiani* would have caused its destruction to have particular ideological effects, and the singular significance of this statue as 'emblematic' of Domitian's tyranny would have made all these effects more prominent. Martial making reference to this within this epigram in particular has other consequences, too. As Rimell points out, 11.21, much like many other explicit epigrams

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<sup>466</sup> Kay (1985) p.1; Roman (2010) p.106.

<sup>467</sup> Sullivan (1991) p.147-55; Rimell (2008) p.7-9. Indeed, Martial references the tendency of the awnings in the Theatre of Pompey not to close in high winds later in the same epigram – Mart. *Ep.* 11.21.6.

<sup>468</sup> Below, p.131.

<sup>469</sup> Rodriguez-Almeida (1982-83) p.96-8.

<sup>470</sup> Rodriguez-Almeida (1982-83) p.98.

in book 11, utilises unappealing and unerotic imagery to disgust the reader.<sup>471</sup> It has already been mentioned how strong the connection between an emperor and his image was in antiquity.<sup>472</sup> By using a statue of the emperor as a metaphor for unattractiveness and anti-erotic sentiment, Martial therefore denigrates not only the image as being unappealing, but also Domitian himself. Suetonius relates that Domitian valued his comely appearance greatly when he was younger, but became embarrassed about his baldness as he grew older.<sup>473</sup> Using his image as a byword for ugliness, as a repulsive metaphor equivalent to ‘an old shoe soaked in muddy water’ (*vetus a crassa calceus udus aqua*),<sup>474</sup> thus plays upon this insecurity and denigrates and reinforces an individual negative part of Domitian’s character. Needless to say, this effect would have been intensified by the fact that this is the very first line of the epigram. Furthermore, as Coleman points out, the plurality of obscene epigrams in book 11 is itself a response to the censorship he had apparently suffered under Domitian.<sup>475</sup> It is only appropriate that a book of epigrams celebrating Martial’s freedom from the censorship of Domitian to publish obscenities, should contain a subtle obscene insult to the emperor who had held him back. This reference by Martial demonstrates the extensive potential for individual images to be reinterpreted during their destruction, as even the smallest and least-noticeable aspects of the image can be tied into a negative characteristic of the condemned tyrant.

The *Sacellum* of Jupiter Conservator, and the *Templum* of Jupiter Custos

The second case study that will be explored will be the *Templum* of Jupiter Custos and the *Sacellum* of Jupiter Conservator on the Capitol, with particular attention paid to the cult statue in the *Templum*. It is not every case that we have as extensive material evidence as we do for the *Equus*, and these are buildings for which there is a paucity. It is therefore impossible to know for sure the exact placement and arrangement of their images and structures, and exactly what happened to them after Domitian’s condemnation. Their existence is, however, attested to by several Roman historians, as is discussed below, and Pliny may offer insight into their possible fate during *damnatio*. These attestations present an opportunity to gain a speculative understanding of the impact of the destruction of individually significant statues when the destructive nature of *damnatio* makes examples like these the exception. In

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<sup>471</sup> Rimell (2008) p.172.

<sup>472</sup> Above, p.56.

<sup>473</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 18.

<sup>474</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 11.21.4

<sup>475</sup> Coleman (2000) p.33-34. Martial’s introduction to Book 8 declares restraint from ‘naughtiness’ (*lascive*), but book 11 declares and celebrates his unfettered license to publish, thanks to Nerva – Mart. *Ep.* 8.*praef.*13-14; Mart. *Ep.* 11.2.5-6. Coleman points out that Nerva was known to have published obscene verses – Pliny *Ep.* 5.3.5. See also the aforementioned celebration via release following the death of a tyrant – above, p.82.

addition, the typology of the cult statue, as described in the sources, and the ideological importance of its dedication, could have lent special meaning to its destruction. Thus, while we can never be certain of what happened to the image, bar the discovery of new evidence, it is worth examining and judging the probabilities of what may have happened based on the evidence that exists. The support for the existence and nature of the two monuments will be discussed first, followed by an analysis of their possible fates during Domitian's *damnatio memoriae* and the consequences of this for Domitian's memory.

Tacitus, Suetonius and Dio, in order of decreasing detail, agree on the essential course of the narrative of the events which these monuments commemorated. During the siege of the Capitol by the Vitellians in the closing days of the civil wars of AD 69, Domitian was hidden away from the attacking Vitellian mob within the house of an *aedituus* of 'a temple'. Domitian then escaped by wearing the garb of a follower of Isis.<sup>476</sup> After the accession of Vespasian, Domitian demolished the house of the *aedituus* and built a shrine (*sacellum*) to Jupiter Conservator in its place, including 'an altar on which [Domitian's] plight was represented in marble' (...*aramque posuit casus suos in marmore expressam*), according to Tacitus.<sup>477</sup> This was almost certainly a narrative relief sculpture, perhaps similar to the *Ara Pacis*, though on a smaller scale. The importance of the events on the Capitoline hill to the formation of Domitian's character as emperor should not be understated. The event is referred to in heroic terms by Martial, Statius and Silius Italicus, and Martial even refers to Domitian composing a poem about his defence of the Capitol.<sup>478</sup> However, the historiographical sources suggest an alternate, derogatory, narrative, in which Domitian hid or fled before he was in real danger, and took no part in the defence of the Capitol.<sup>479</sup>

Once Domitian had become emperor, he built a 'great temple' (*templum ingens*) of Jupiter Custos on the Capitol, something also mentioned by Suetonius.<sup>480</sup> Tacitus' description of the cult statue of the temple, featuring Jupiter with Domitian being *in sinu dei*, is rather ambiguous. It has variously been interpreted as Domitian being in the folds of Jupiter's cloak, or Jupiter sitting with Domitian on his lap.<sup>481</sup> It could be argued that the contemporary depiction on coins of Jupiter Custos sitting down lends greater credibility to the suggestion

<sup>476</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.74; Dio 64.17.4; Suet. *Dom.* 1.2; Hannestad (1988) p.134; Southern (1997) p.17-18.

<sup>477</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.74. The fact that Tacitus does not condemn Domitian for the demolition of the house suggests that it was done in a tactful way, as if it was done maliciously, I doubt Tacitus would have hesitated to criticise Domitian for it. Perhaps the *aedituus* was well compensated. See also Hill (1960a) p.120-121.

<sup>478</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 5.5.7, 9.101.13; Statius *Theb.* 1.21-22; Sil. 3.609; Southern (1997) p.18.

<sup>479</sup> A view put forward by Southern (1997) p.18 and Sailor (2008) p.220.

<sup>480</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 5.1.

<sup>481</sup> Tac. *Hist.* 3.74. For discussion of this, see Hill (1960a) p.120-121; Richardson (1992) p.218; Jones, B. (1992) p.88; Reusser (1996) p.131-2; Southern (1997) p.18; Alföldi (1999) p.221, n.8 – none are confident in either interpretation, except Alföldi – see below.



that he was sitting with Domitian in his lap.<sup>482</sup> However, as Alföldi points out, there are later coins depicting Jupiter Custos standing that feature a smaller figure in front of the god's cloak.<sup>483</sup> The consequences of these interpretations on how we understand the statue's later history will be discussed below,<sup>484</sup> but in the absence of new evidence I would argue this is a question that is impossible to resolve with certainty. The construction of this temple and the statue group acts as a votive offering to the god that Domitian perceived to have helped him.<sup>485</sup> Considering the monument's purpose to embody Domitian's bravery and that he is favoured by the gods, both positive aspects of his character, it is especially interesting to look at the consequences of its destruction.

In order to fully understand the consequences of the destruction of a monument, it is certainly beneficial to have clear archaeological evidence that documents it. In both the case of the *sacellum* and the *templum*, however, the archaeology provides precious few clues as to the monument's location and fate. These clues and the hypothesised identifications that have been derived from them ought to be closely scrutinised. For the *sacellum*, the first of the two monuments, an identification has been suggested with a structure under the site of the modern Capitoline museums (Fig.16).<sup>486</sup> Arata astutely identifies the building as a *sacellum*,<sup>487</sup> and observes that the relatively certain date of construction (AD 41-81) provided by the brick stamps, along with the unusual residential location of the north-western Capitoline, significantly narrows down the possibilities for identification.<sup>488</sup> Arata asserts that this leads us to two possible conclusions, offered with equal possibility – that this was either a grand private shrine to the *Lares*, or that this was a place of public cult activity. Arata, being aware that this question may be impossible to resolve with certainty, offers his own hypothesis for the structure's identification. Arata notes that the private surroundings of the *sacellum* imply an association with a cult of semi-clandestine nature. Rejecting Mithras on the basis of chronology and typology,<sup>489</sup> Arata suggests the possibility of a sanctuary of Isis and Serapis.<sup>490</sup> However, the story of Domitian's rescue provides a *terminus ante quem* for the existence of a sanctuary to Isis on the Capitoline which is incompatible with the established date of

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<sup>482</sup> *RIC* II.1 Domitian, no.465; *BMCRE* III, no.373\*

<sup>483</sup> *RIC* II.2 Trajan nos.249, 643 (Fig.17), Alföldi (1999) p.45.

<sup>484</sup> Below, p.98-99.

<sup>485</sup> Southern (1997) p.18-19; Alföldi (1999) p.221 n.10; Closs (2016) p.117.

<sup>486</sup> It is only 2.8m by 1.58m at its greatest extent.

<sup>487</sup> Arata (1997) p.144; Forcellini (1771) p.182. It is clear from the arrangement of the niches that this building had a sacred purpose, and the lack of a roof in the original scheme is a tell-tale sign of a Roman *sacellum*. The other possible identification for such an arrangement – a nymphaeum – is rightly rejected by Arata due to the absence of evidence for pipes or locations where pipes might have once been.

<sup>488</sup> Arata (1997) p.140, 145, 152.

<sup>489</sup> Arata (1997) p.146.

<sup>490</sup> Arata (1997) p.148.

construction.<sup>491</sup> He therefore offers the hypothesis that this is the *sacellum* of Jupiter Conservator on four main grounds. Firstly, the typology is appropriate for a small structure dedicated to cult use.<sup>492</sup> Secondly, the *sacellum* discovered is located on the east slope of the *Arx*, in a possibly residential area – since the sources tell us that it was built on the site of the home of an *aedituus*, meaning that the residential context fits with this identification. Finally, the construction of the shrine of Jupiter Conservator fits within the period of construction (AD 41-80), as it is said to have been built during Vespasian's reign. Finally, Arata notes that the structure suffered a loss of function that can be dated securely to the early Antonine period.<sup>493</sup> Arata argues that the reasons for this relates to its destruction and/or abandonment after the *damnatio memoriae* of Domitian.<sup>494</sup> It is important to restate that we cannot say for certain that this was a private or public sanctuary. However, I would agree with Arata that, if this was indeed a public *sacellum*, this is the most likely identification.

If this hypothesis is indeed correct, therefore, it leads to the conclusion that the *sacellum* in some way suffered during Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*. If true, this would be rather extraordinary, as religious buildings, as established by Davies, are normally considered sacrosanct regarding targets for destruction following *damnatio*.<sup>495</sup> In this instance, I would suggest that it was the destruction and mutilation of the images of Domitian within the *sacellum* that caused the structure to lose its purpose – these images would have been, in principle, subject to destruction under the senate's decree.<sup>496</sup> The fact that it was thereafter abandoned could be indicative of the severity of the damage; if it was no longer useable as a shrine to Jupiter after the *damnatio memoriae*, it could be argued that these attacks were tantamount to an attack on the structure itself. Arata believes that the reason the *sacellum* was not granted the customary immunity to *damnatio memoriae* was due to the building's particularly close historical associations with Domitian.<sup>497</sup> The defacement of the *sacellum* could also have acted as a condemnation of his building work, as it was the first structure he built in Rome, and was commissioned before he became emperor. This could have been portrayed as foreshadowing his 'excessive', building projects in Rome.<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>491</sup> Arata (1997) p.151-2; Suet. *Dom.* 1.2. Arata also suggests that such a sanctuary would have likely been in continuous use since the emergence of the cult in the late republican period.

<sup>492</sup> Arata (1997) p.152.

<sup>493</sup> Arata (1997) p.138.

<sup>494</sup> Arata (1997) p.152-154.

<sup>495</sup> Davies (2000a) p.38. This is not without exception, as the reported images of Caligula as a god and the temples to Elagabal demonstrate – see below, p.141-9.

<sup>496</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 23.1; See above, p.54.

<sup>497</sup> Arata (1997) p.154.

<sup>498</sup> Below, p.106.

The archaeological evidence for the *templum* is accurately described by Darwall-Smith as 'very poor'.<sup>499</sup> The only suggestion thus far is that it could be identified with a concrete platform found under the modern *Via del Tempio di Giove* (Fig.18), simply on the basis that it could work chronologically.<sup>500</sup> As far as we know, the temple itself was not destroyed; it is possibly depicted later in the period, and the destruction of a temple to Jupiter would have been a uniquely extraordinary measure for *damnatio* to the extent that the sources would certainly have reported it.<sup>501</sup>

However, while the *templum* itself was likely left undamaged, the cult statue seems to be the most likely target for any *damnatio*-inspired destructive acts in the building, as it contained an image of the condemned tyrant himself. To speculate on the likelihood of the statue being subject to destruction, it would surely have been unacceptable to leave an image of Domitian on display in the cult statue of a temple if his memory were condemned. Indeed, statues of Domitian on the Capitoline hill are one of only a few examples for which we have the destruction described by a contemporary source. Pliny states in his passage specifically that Domitian's statues were 'casting pollution, since the figures of the gods were defiled by having statues of an incestuous emperor in their midst'.<sup>502</sup> He has the Capitoline in mind during this description, as he is attempting to contrast Domitian's many statues with the relatively few statues of Trajan there. Seeing as the image of Domitian in the *templum* of Jupiter Custos could certainly have been described as 'amidst the figures of the gods', it is possible that this statue is among those that Pliny described being destroyed, or even that he is indirectly referring to this particular effigy. Furthermore, the hypothetical identification of the *sacellum* implies that sacred sites closely connected with Domitian were subject to some degree of damage during or after Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*. While it is impossible to be certain, I argue on these grounds that the statue would have been targeted in some way following Domitian's condemnation, and that the Pliny passage indicates that this took place during the immediate 'spectacle' event.

If this statue was indeed damaged or defaced during or after Domitian's *damnatio*, it is worth discussing the most likely possibilities for how this might have taken place. While, again, we can not be certain in any conclusion, we can examine the balance of probabilities which favour each possibility, and therefore hypothesise on the most likely fate of the image. Firstly, I would argue that it is very unlikely that this statue would have been reworked into depicting

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<sup>499</sup> Darwall-Smith (1996) p.110.

<sup>500</sup> Reusser (1996) p.131-2 for potential identification of original site; Richardson (1992) p.218; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.110-11.

<sup>501</sup> See Darwall-Smith (1996) p.112; Filippi (2017) p.175.

<sup>502</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 52.3-4 (Index 5).

Nerva in the lap, or fold, of Jupiter. The statue group would have featured a depiction of Domitian as a youth, and thus considerably unsuitable for reworking into a verist portrait of the elderly Nerva. It would also have been far too closely associated with Domitian historically. It has been argued that historical connotations were the main factor which prevented the Cancellaria A relief from ever being displayed on a monument after being reworked, and the Cancellaria B relief not being reworked in the first place.<sup>503</sup> These reliefs are less closely connected to Domitian than the statue group in the temple here, to the extent that the identification of Domitian in the B relief has recently been called into doubt; the fact that they were not reworked could evidence a threshold of historical sensitivity beyond which an image of Domitian could not be successfully reworked. Thus, it is much more likely that the statue of Domitian within the statue group was, to some extent, directly destroyed or defaced.

With this being the most likely fate of the image if it was subject to erasure, it is worthwhile speculating further on the impact of this on the memory of Domitian. The destruction of this one image would have been incredibly important symbolically, considering its historical connotations. The ‘murder’, by proxy, of Domitian under the eyes of his supposed protector would have been patently ironic, and a powerful assertion that Domitian had lost the favour of the god that he had once believed protected him. Modern scholarship is already aware of the Roman conceptualisation that gods watched festivities happily from the location of their temple – a Roman viewer might assume that Jupiter Custos would be watching the spectacle within the temple, and by choosing not to protect Domitian, was endorsing his condemnation.<sup>504</sup> This could have been augmented by the fact that a mob storming the Capitol to destroy the statues of Domitian, something which Pliny describes,<sup>505</sup> would have recalled memories of the Vitellians storming the Capitol in AD 69. Southern expresses Domitian’s original experience artfully:

‘Domitian had witnessed the violence of which an enraged mob was capable, and had seen how easily passions could be roused and, in an instant, expand beyond the control of the leader in whose name the mob fought.’<sup>506</sup>

The en masse spectacle of the destruction of Domitian’s statues on the Capitoline thus could have seemed to be almost a re-enactment of the situation in which Jupiter Conservator had originally chosen to save Domitian. If Arata’s hypothesis on the identification of the *sacellum* is

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<sup>503</sup> Varner (2004) p.119-120; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.177. Compare with Hannestad, who argued that Domitian was not recognised on Cancellaria B, and was not recarved for this reason – Hannestad (1988) p.137; Kleiner (1992) p.192, 200.

<sup>504</sup> Southern (1997) p.18-19. Favro (1999) p.211 talks about the concept of a god watching a spectacle proudly from his temple, referring to Consus and the *Consualia*.

<sup>505</sup> Pliny. *Pan.* 52.5, Index 5.

<sup>506</sup> Southern (1997) p.18.

correct, furthermore, then it is possible that such a mob enacted this destruction on the exact spot of Domitian's original rescue.

Southern also suggests that the construction of the temple may have been a statement of awareness of the changing opinions of his subjects, and a warning to his opponents of the verifiable divine support.<sup>507</sup> The statue, and its subsequent destruction, could have thus represented Domitian's failed attempt to control or manipulate the mob. The importance of the event to the establishment of the virtuous aspects of Domitian's character has already been mentioned. It has also been noted that many of his political enemies would disparage him, by pointing out that he did not take part in the defence of the Capitol itself, and merely hid himself away.<sup>508</sup> Indeed, the construction of these two commemorations of the event has been seen as a misstep by Sailor – 'Finding nothing unseemly in the cowardice and turpitude he had evinced that day, he set it out in lasting marble for all to see, as proof of Jupiter's favour'.<sup>509</sup> The destruction of this statue could have been interpreted as an affirmation of this opposing narrative and a denial of Domitian's 'heroic' role as portrayed in state-sponsored poetry.<sup>510</sup> The event of the destruction would also have enabled mockery of Domitian's celebration of his own supposed cowardice in public for the first time.

However, Domitian was not the only component in this statue group, as he stood alongside the depiction of Jupiter Conservator. Understanding what may have happened to this effigy is also important to any discussion on the reception of how the group suffered after Domitian's condemnation. I would argue that, considering the implications of attacking a cult statue of a god, Jupiter Conservator himself is unlikely to have been destroyed in this action. The feasibility of destroying or removing Domitian while leaving Jupiter untouched would vary depending on the material and positioning of the figures. It seems logical that in any case, the join would likely have been between the two images in the statue group. If it was made of marble, or ivory, then the sections would have been primarily connected with dowels, with a possibility for the supplementary usage of adhesives and cross-pins for chryselephantine statues, and stone supporting bridges (*'puntelli'*) for marble.<sup>511</sup> These dowel joints, even with the potential supports, would be weak points in the overall structure, meaning that the image of Domitian would be easier to break off if attacked. If the statue was bronze, or another metal, however, it would have been significantly more difficult. Separate parts of bronze statues were held together via welds, occasionally supported through the use of small

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<sup>507</sup> Southern (1997) p.19.

<sup>508</sup> Above, p.93.

<sup>509</sup> Sailor (2008) p.220.

<sup>510</sup> Pailler & Sablayrolles (1994) p.31-2. Above, p.93 n.408.

<sup>511</sup> As discussed in Lapatin (2001) p.18; Claridge (2015) p.109.

rectangular patches.<sup>512</sup> These joins would thus be almost as strong as any other part of the statue. However, even in this case, it would be possible to destroy the image of Domitian without damaging the image of Jupiter Conservator, simply by attacking and removing the parts of Domitian that were not directly attached. This would result in a much less ‘clean’ removal, leaving vestiges of the emperor, but the message would still be clear. Any of these possibilities would result in Jupiter being left alone – a powerful and lasting symbol, and something that would remain to be seen by more than just those present at the act of destruction itself. Sailor has suggested that Domitian’s temple to Jupiter Custos could have been seen as an attempt to compete with that of Jupiter *Optimus Maximus*.<sup>513</sup> If this interpretation was echoed contemporaneously, then the removal of Domitian and leaving Jupiter alone could have been seen as a re-assertion of the supremacy of the chief deity. The frieze depicting Domitian escaping from the Vitellians, found on the altar in the original *sacellum*, would also have been a target for the *damnatio*. This could have had similar implications if Domitian’s images on the frieze were obliterated in the manner that Geta’s image was later, on the well-known Arch of the *Argentarii*, leaving a clear and noticeable gap which alluded to his erasure.

It is important to discuss here Alföldi’s suggestion that the statue group could be seen on a coin of Trajan.<sup>514</sup> The coin depicts Jupiter Conservator standing above a smaller figure of the emperor, who is standing in front of the god’s legs, with Jupiter’s cloak visible behind him (Fig.17). Alföldi agrees that the original statue group would not have escaped Domitian’s *damnatio memoriae* unscathed, and points out that Pliny specifically praises Trajan for not befouling the Capitoline with statues.<sup>515</sup> He therefore suggests that this image is either borrowing from the original statue group iconographically, or that this is evidence of a Trajanic reconstruction of the statue group in the vestibule of the temple. Though it is difficult to resolve for certain which of these possibilities the coin represents, both are intriguing. If it was simply imitating the iconography of the Domitianic statue group, it would not only act as an appropriation of Domitian’s ‘patron god’, but also act as a reminder of the destruction of the original statue during Domitian’s *damnatio memoriae*. If it was a reconstruction, these effects would have been amplified by the presence of the new statue group where the old one stood, memorialising the erasure of Domitian on the spot it took place. Though this does not directly relate to the immediate ‘spectacle’ of *damnatio* which we are discussing now, and tells us more about the long-term effects that are discussed in the subsequent chapters, it is

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<sup>512</sup> Mattusch (2015) p.146-149.

<sup>513</sup> Sailor (2008) p.220-1.

<sup>514</sup> *RIC* II.2 Trajan, nos. 249-50, 619, 643; Alföldi (1999) p.45.

<sup>515</sup> Alföldi (1999) p.45.

important to note that the semi-spontaneous acts that occurred during that event often left long-lasting marks on the city. These marks served as a reminder of the initial acts of destruction, and knowledge of these long-term effects may have had an impact on the emotional responses of participants in the destruction.

To conclude, with the current evidence, it is impossible to determine for certain what happened to the images of Domitian in the *sacellum* of Jupiter Conservator and the *templum* of Jupiter Custos. However, through close examination of the available sources, archaeological evidence and understanding of parallel examples, it is possible to speculate on their most likely fate. The suggested identification of the *sacellum* may offer a glimpse into how sacred buildings could be subject to *damnatio memoriae* under very specific circumstances, and how this could have had very significant consequences for Domitian's memory. It seems most likely that the statue group in the *templum* would have been targeted for destruction after Domitian's condemnation, that this would not have involved recarving, and that the image of Jupiter would not have been attacked alongside it. Thus, we can theorise on how the circumstances surrounding the destruction of this image would have affected Domitian's memory, beyond its simple obliteration. This image could consequently have had an equally powerful effect in 'death' as it had in 'life', as the act of destruction acts as a denial of all that Domitian had wished it to represent – divine favour, popular support and individual heroism. Furthermore, it could have acted as an assertion that Domitian, in fact, possessed the opposing vices – that he was befouling and had angered the gods, that he had futilely attempted to manipulate the populace, and he was, as his enemies asserted, a coward in the face of danger.

Individually significant images under Commodus, and images associated with events under Domitian

As comparanda, it is worthwhile to examine a couple of examples from the reign of Commodus, both to demonstrate the typical amount of evidence one would expect when looking for individual statues which suffered *damnatio memoriae*, and so that we are not entirely reliant on Domitianic examples to prove the concept. The first of these, and the better represented in sources, is the Colossus after Commodus had it modified to resemble him in the guise of Hercules. The history of this monument and its role in the *damnationes* of multiple emperors will be discussed in full in the epilogue of this thesis, so it will not be repeated here.<sup>516</sup> It is worth noting here, however, that the restoration of the statue's original

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<sup>516</sup> Below, p.201.

appearance following its transformation by Commodus to resemble him as Hercules acted as a specific and powerful condemnation of his wider efforts to align himself with the god.<sup>517</sup>

A second curious example, mentioned by Herodian but attested by no archaeological evidence, is also interesting in this regard. The historian describes a statue of Commodus as an archer, poised to shoot at the senate house, claiming that 'he wanted even his statues to inspire fear of him' (ἐβούλετο γὰρ δὴ καὶ τὰς εἰκόνας αὐτῷ φόβον ἀπειλεῖν).<sup>518</sup> The connotations here are immediately obvious – the statue is a threat to his senatorial opposition. The fact that such a statue was placed in the *Forum Romanum* is also an affront to the senators, the place representing republican values and political freedom, as has been discussed earlier. Its destruction (καθελοῦσα)<sup>519</sup> would represent a resurgence of these values in opposition to the tyrannical oppression of Commodus, again, much like the *Equus Domitiani*. Herodian says that it was later replaced by a statue of *Libertas* by the senate, suggesting that they were fully conscious of the significance of the erasure of this particular statue, and the particular connotations such an act had.<sup>520</sup> The destruction of this statue could also act as condemnation of one of Commodus' more particular traits. Its guise as an archer is juxtaposed in Herodian's text with an account of a staged hunt in the arena, in which he slaughters many animals from the safety of his enclosure.<sup>521</sup> Smith interprets this as implying that the senate would sympathise with the helpless animal victims of Commodus' hunts.<sup>522</sup> The later destruction of the statue would thus be a statement of defiance against Commodus' physical threats, and a denial of his attempts to be immune to his victims. The importance of this image seems to have been recognised by Herodian, who uses its existence and subsequent destruction to tell a story of a senate that was suppressed temporarily by a cruel tyrant, but which was able to ultimately bring him to justice.

So far, we have only examined monuments which would have been exceptional in Rome on their own merit. This is the reason that they have been mentioned in the sources, in fact. There are some statues in Rome that were referred to in historiography, not for anything significant with regards to the statue itself or its context, but in connection with relatively minor yet symbolically significant events in the city. Looking further into these examples requires some speculation, but it is useful to imagine how their inevitable destruction during the *damnatio memoriae* would have impacted the tyrant's memory. For instance, Cassius Dio

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<sup>517</sup> Below, p.203.

<sup>518</sup> Herodian 1.14.9.

<sup>519</sup> Whittaker, in the Loeb edition, translates this as 'removes' but the verb can also have the sense of 'pull down' or 'raze to the ground', implying a more violent end.

<sup>520</sup> Herodian 1.15.1; Bats (2003) p.287; Filippi (2017) p.178.

<sup>521</sup> Herodian 1.15.2-6.

<sup>522</sup> Smith, S.D. (2014) p.80-81.



relates that at one point in Domitian's reign, a woman was put to death for undressing before an image of the emperor.<sup>523</sup> Individually, one might imagine such an event to be forgotten as unimportant amongst the wider scale of Domitian's crimes. Yet, the specific reference in Cassius Dio demonstrates that the incident was still known of in his time, a century and a half after the death of Domitian. It is probable that while the event was still in the social memory of Roman citizens, before the last person who could have witnessed it died, that the specific location and statue would also have been remembered. The destruction of this statue would thus be a condemnation of this abuse of Domitian's power, and therefore a condemnation of all abuses of this kind – trivial executions and over-sensitivity. Furthermore, while it is impossible to know the exact circumstances of the scene that occurred around each statue, considering the apparently cheerful atmosphere of the spectacle, it is possible that the people would relish the opportunity to recreate the event for which the statue was well known following Domitian's downfall. This opportunity to disregard the oppressive rules that Domitian had established would act as a particularly powerful 'release' from tyranny – a concept discussed in the previous chapter.

A reliable equivalent is lacking within the sources for Commodus, so for a comparative example we should turn to Nero. A famous, and oft-cited, example of an individual statue being known purely because of an event associated with it occurred during his reign. Cassius Dio asserts that after his matricide of Agrippina the Younger, a leather bag was hung to an image of Nero, making reference to the *poena cullei* (the punishment for parricide) and wishing this punishment upon the emperor.<sup>524</sup> Again, since this event was well-known enough for it to have been remembered in Dio's time, it is most probable that the statue and the incident in question would be known at the time of Nero's downfall. The 'murder' of this statue would thus be a realisation of the effective threat that was made years earlier. It has already been mentioned, furthermore, that there was a tendency for statues of condemned emperors to be found in the Tiber, suggesting the deliberate dumping of the remains there, by way of association with the bodies of condemned criminals. If this particular statue were to be dumped into the Tiber, the punishment would be even more directly fulfilled – cementing the anti-Neronian narrative even further.<sup>525</sup> Events could be associated with images to the extent that the image carried the memory of the event. Any subsequent interaction with the image,

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<sup>523</sup> Dio.67.12.2

<sup>524</sup> Dio.61.16.1; Rollin (1979) p.165; Pekáry (1985) p.141; Gregory (1994) p.94; Flower (2006) p.10 – all reference this event as an example of various points – civil disobedience, spontaneous *damnatio memoriae* or *damnatio* as a form of free speech.

<sup>525</sup> Pekáry (1985) p.141 points out that it is not mentioned whether or not the perpetrator was punished. I would argue that Dio would have specifically mentioned it if he was, as he did with the Domitianic example discussed above. The possibility of the original perpetrator being present or participating in the destruction of the image of Nero would add further weight to Nero's condemnation.

or the place on which it stood, would thus be interacting with the memory of the event in question.

## Conclusion

The destruction of prominent individual monuments should always have been considered significant. In the modern era, the destructions of single notable monuments are often used to represent the event that resulted in the decision to tear them down. This can be seen in examples like the statue of Stalin in Budapest mentioned in the previous chapter, or the colossal marble swastika that overlooked the Zeppelintribüne, the Nazi grandstand, the demolition of which in 1945 is often used as a symbol of the final German defeat. It is no surprise, then, that an examination of the evidence from the Roman period reveals examples of monuments, primarily statues, which would have had singular importance during their destruction. The *Equus Domitiani*, as a monument that came to symbolize Domitian's rule in itself, embodied many of the aspects for which Domitian had wanted to be known. It symbolized his building work, and its destruction condemned it as wasteful. He had wanted it to symbolize his friendship with the senate and his respect for the republic, and when the senate had it pulled down, this would have turned this image on its head, cementing the image as the emblem of his oppression of the senate and republican ideals. Furthermore, the fame of the statue – its presence in text – allows us to look further into the intent, interpretation and retrospective views of the statue. Their continued existence would serve to preserve its memory long after the *damnatio memoriae*, and thus the contrast between their words and the absence of the image would have similar consequences to the original destruction event. The portraits of Domitian in the *sacellum* and *templum* of Jupiter Conservator/Custos serve as a more typical example, bearing much less material evidence and brief mentions from contemporary historians. Despite this, we can utilise this sparse evidence to theorise on the possible fates of the images during Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*, and thus glean how Domitian's memory may have been affected by attacks upon them. The fact that the monument was erected in commemoration of a particular event, and one which Domitian relied on for his self-portrayal as a positive *exemplum*, means that the erasure of his presence from the monument would have acted to deny this positive narrative, and assert the negative one proposed by his enemies. The circumstances of this destruction would also have had an influence, acting as a re-enactment of the original event, lending irony to the scene and denying the religious favour that Domitian had claimed as a result of his experiences on the Capitoline hill. The examples from Commodus that were discussed mirror much of what made the destruction of the *Equus* significant. As will be discussed in the last chapter, religious and historical connotations of changing the appearance of the *Colossus Solis* to look like oneself

would have added a great deal of meaning to any spontaneous damage that occurred to it after Commodus' death, as well as to the eventual restoration of the statue to its original state.<sup>526</sup> The image of Commodus portrayed by this edited Colossus and the statue of him as a hunter in the forum was important too, as it allowed his enemies to attack him posthumously for what he had been proud of during his lifetime. Otherwise minor monuments that become the avatars for significant events could also carry the memories of an event which could come to define an emperor's character, and their destruction would effectively confirm these narratives, especially if the circumstances of the destruction commemorate the original event in some way.

The examination of individual monuments and the circumstances of their destruction during *damnatio memoriae* demonstrates very clearly the ultimate potential of the *damnatio memoriae* of emperors in this period – not only to eliminate and contradict the positive image of the condemned emperor, but also to replace this narrative with a more compelling negative one. Only through attacking particular characteristics, personality traits or (in)competencies could this have been realistically achieved. After all, the broader consequences of *damnatio memoriae*, the creation of many anti-monuments and the pseudo-erasure of the tyrant from history, can only really serve to explain to a viewer **that** an individual has been condemned and not **why** he should be. Of course, texts, social memories, and oral histories would interact with this wider display to provide the details of this narrative. It is nevertheless important to note that the material spectacle, the true liminal event between the reign of the tyrant and his virtuous successor, also contributed to this in a large way.

Furthermore, the memory of the monuments that were particularly famous as embodying the character of the tyrant, such as the *Equus* or the Colossus, persisted 'in death'. Their destruction would have inverted the purpose of these monuments. It would have the effect of turning their location from a monument to their image as a positive *exemplum* into one that celebrated not only the people's hatred of him, but also to his pride of the particular things that they hated him for.

This process begins with the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, but it does not end here. The scenes of destruction are only one way in which this message was disseminated – after the death of the tyrant, the publication of texts, spreading of oral histories, and the existence of the remnants of destroyed monuments would continue to reinforce a negative image of the tyrant, all of which have been covered by existing scholarship. However, there are more ways in which their material legacy can contribute to the survival and transformation of

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<sup>526</sup> Below, p.203.

their negative identity in the cultural memory, and these longer-term effects are covered in the following section.

## SECTION 2: THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF *DAMNATIO*

### *MEMORIAE*.

#### Chapter 3: *Damnatio memoriae* and contrast between the tyrant and his successors.

A foil for the successor's virtue

The 'afterlife' of *damnatio memoriae*, the remnants and memory of the material destroyed and the subsequent interaction with it, is critical to understanding the purpose of *damnatio* as a means to transform a condemned emperor into a negative *exemplum* of tyranny. An *exemplum*, after all, not only needs to be established and archived to continue in the Roman cultural memory. It also needs to be continuously utilised and reconstructed so as to remain demonstrably relevant to Roman society's ever-changing needs. As discussed in the introduction, these long-term consequences of the initial *damnatio* event, and the effects they have on the tyrant's memory, is something that has not been sufficiently covered by the existing scholarship. The following two chapters will cover two ways in which this negative memory was sustained by successive emperors, both those reigning immediately after the tyrant, and those that reigned long after the tyrant's negative identity had passed into the cultural memory.

The first of two means by which a successive emperor would utilise and transform the memory of a tyrant is through contrasting his own character and his own work with those of the condemned tyrant. The motivations for a successor to do this are quite obvious. The further he visibly distances himself from the actions of a hated (or to-be-hated) predecessor, the more virtuous he seems by comparison. In addition, his claims to legitimacy often derived from the necessity of the tyrant's violent end, and so continuing to degrade the tyrant through unfavourable contrast would be in his best interests. In this chapter, I will explore the contrast between a tyrant's material legacy and the work of his successors, particularly his immediate successor, as being part of the continuing process of *damnatio memoriae*.

Firstly, however, we ought to look at what has already been said within the existing scholarship. Of course, the idea that emperors would wish to contrast themselves with a denigrated predecessor is not a new one. Indeed, for many successors of tyrants, their reigns are short enough that they are almost entirely defined in terms of how they had interacted

with the legacy of their condemned predecessor.<sup>527</sup> This contrast, whether it is judged to be deliberate or incidental, is often commented upon by scholars when discussing the policies of these successors. However, it is most often only discussed in the context of a single emperor and his goals, and is not drawn into the wider picture of the phenomenon across the Roman period.<sup>528</sup> In addition, it is rarely framed within the process of *damnatio memoriae*, and therefore its contribution to the creation and crystallisation of the predecessor's negative reputation is often ignored. As we have seen, in order for a memory to be remembered by a society, it needs to serve some purpose.<sup>529</sup> It is only after some culturally relevant application for a social memory is established, such as an *exemplum* for one aspect of tyrannical behaviour, that the memory is recorded, interacted with and transformed along with the society. This allows the memory's transition into the more permanent cultural memory of the society. Deliberate contrast is one of two key means by which this process is enabled for the memory of Roman tyrants following *damnatio memoriae*.

There are two major exceptions to this scarcity in existing scholarship, however. In the study of one transfer of power, between Nero's Rome and that of the Flavians, and in the study of one particular type of material contrast, the reworking of withdrawn statues of condemned tyrants.<sup>530</sup> For the Flavian example, I believe this attention is the result of two factors. Firstly, this relationship is almost certainly the most obvious and extensive example of this type of deliberate contrast within the Roman period. Secondly, Martial's epigram (Index 10) has given ancient authorisation to this interpretation of the Flavian building programme:

*reddita Roma sibi est et sunt te praeside, Caesar,  
deliciae populi, quae fuerant domini.*

Rome has been restored to herself, and with you in charge, Caesar,

What used to be the pleasure of a master is now the pleasure of the people.<sup>531</sup>

This is a clear ancient recognition of the phenomenon. Martial goes so far as to break down the individual instances of contrast within the wider programme by naming what formerly occupied the space of each current monument. It can be inferred that this passage has inspired much of the modern focus on this particular instance of contrast. Despite this having

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<sup>527</sup> This is perhaps due to an inherent commonality among these rulers – an insecure position derived from the violent overthrowing of their predecessor.

<sup>528</sup> Flaig, an exception, has developed his model of Roman succession based on the study of multiple case studies, considering usurpation, and thus contrast with an unacceptable predecessor, to be an essential component of this. See Flaig (2010) on Nero, and Flaig (2015) on Galba.

<sup>529</sup> Above, p.25.

<sup>530</sup> See Galinsky (2008); Varner (2000a); Varner (2004).

<sup>531</sup> Mart. *De spect.* 2.1.11-12 (Index 10).

been covered in detail by previous scholarship, it will be discussed here, as it is still singularly significant in its extent and recognition, and it is worthwhile to place it within the context of this form of contrast throughout the early Empire. In addition, there has been some discussion recently as to how deliberate this contrast may have been, or to what extent Nero's *Domus Aurea* had been interpreted as symbolic of tyranny by the people. I will put these discussions within the broader context of *damnatio memoriae*, and discuss how this contrast contributed to the ongoing development of Nero as a negative *exemplum* of tyranny.

Recarving portraits, on the other hand, is a much more recent focus in scholarship, spearheaded by Varner's work on the subject in 2000 and 2004.<sup>532</sup> The fundamental connection between this practice and contrast is the argument that when a portrait was recarved, aspects of the original portrait were deliberately kept intact. This was done in order to display the fact that the image had originally been that of someone else. This would then serve to both embody the appropriation of some of the positive aspects of the tyrant's identity, as well as remind the viewer of the tyrant and his vices while viewing a flattering portrait of a successor. Varner, though he was not the first to put forward this interpretation of reworked portraits, certainly goes into the most detail in his analyses. In his 2004 work, he systematically studies the reworked portraits of tyrants up to the early 4<sup>th</sup> century to identify these deliberate remnants, offering a diachronic perspective and convincing proof of the existence of this phenomenon. This has been discussed extensively by Varner and others. However, because of the importance of this as one part of the entire array of contrast between a successor and a predecessor, it will also be discussed in brief here. When examined in context, furthermore, there are some consequences of the reworking of portraits which are not immediately obvious in isolation.

These are not the only instances of contrast between a tyrannical emperor and his successors, however; other examples of this integral continuation of *damnatio memoriae* demonstrate that the relationship between Nero's Rome and that of the Flavians was not unique. I will analyse how the significance of the monuments discussed in the last chapter during the initial destructive spectacle lends their sites a similar significance in the social memory of the city. I will also be exploring some other intriguing examples from hitherto undiscussed emperors, as an initial exploration of this idea, and to demonstrate that deliberate contrast occurs throughout the period.

'Contrast', as a concept, should also be thoroughly explained and defined before beginning an analysis of this kind. It seems to me that all methods of contrast are intended to

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<sup>532</sup> Varner (2000a) & (2004)

draw attention to a difference in ideologies between the condemned predecessor and the successor, and this can be achieved through a number of different mechanisms. One key question that ought to be addressed is whether juxtaposition is strictly necessary. Often, something is considered to be contrasting with something else even if there is not necessarily any evidence that they were spatially or temporally juxtaposed – simply the memory of an individual viewing or reading the subjects is enough to allow the possibility of contrast between two objects or texts. I would argue that, in the case of objects, this is certainly true, meaning that ideological contrast can occur between two objects that are separated spatially.<sup>533</sup> However, when two contrasting objects share a space, or if the newer occupies the space of the former after it was destroyed, the contrast is much more likely to be noticed by a viewer. Its emotive effect would then also be increased for those who do notice it. When this direct spatial relationship between two subjects occurs, it will be referred to as spatial juxtaposition. Visual contrast, on the other hand, occurs when one object and another are differentiated in a way that does not imply any particular ideology, as defined by a prioritisation of supporting certain aspects of Roman society over others. For example, in this case, a successor could choose to go with a different style of building, or colour of marble, than his predecessor. This contrasts the successor with the tyrant in a self-serving manner, without making any statement about either of their characters in isolation. This kind of contrast relies on the wider narrative of ideological contrast to be meaningful, and itself adds strength to it, but without needing to prove it directly. I would also introduce the concept of temporal contrast here, if it were not for the fact that all the examples I intend to examine here are temporally related. In all the cases discussed, either some remnant of the original object in Rome co-exists with the later one, or the memory of the original object persists in the social memory.

Ideological contrast embodies many different forms in itself, of course, relating to particular ideologies that were considered contrasting in the Roman period. This ties closely into the characters of each individual tyrant, and as has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis, there are several ideological tropes which relate to the Roman conceptualisation of tyranny.<sup>534</sup> While I would argue that the bad emperors of antiquity were not seen as identical, and did not embody exactly the same tropes as a result, there are certainly some common traits considered to be tyrannical in ancient Rome. In this chapter, I will examine the

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<sup>533</sup> For example, the contrast between Trajan's place of burial in his Column in the Forum of Trajan, and that of his predecessors in the mausoleum of Augustus would be felt, despite the two monuments being separated by over a kilometre within the city. Though the interpretation of this contrast would likely be different, as Trajan is not condemning the previous dynasties' model of sharing a familial tumulus, the difference between the two would still likely have been noted.

<sup>534</sup> Above, p.37.



exploitation and intensification of some of these tropes via contrast. The first, and most important, is the autocratic and cruel nature of the tyrant. This is a characteristic which features in the manufactured characters we receive of all the tyrants in this period. After all, acts which are hated or are forbidden to be carried out require a degree of autocracy to carry out. However, it is certainly true that some emperors were more infamous for their cruelty and domination than others. The successor would then seek to contrast this with his own respect for the senate and liberality. This relationship also encompasses the memory of the republic, as autocratic tyrants are often condemned as anti-republican and disrespectful of this still-revered past, and successors adopt republican symbols and characteristics in order to contrast themselves with this.<sup>535</sup>

As an exploration of this form of contrast, I will be examining the relationship between the Rome of Nero and the Flavians, as well as how the successors to Domitian and Commodus used the material legacy of the monuments discussed in the previous chapters to demonstrate differences between themselves and these tyrants. It is also true that a typical trait of Roman tyrants is impiety and irreverence towards religion. This can take multiple different forms, from the over-promotion of a tutelary god(dess), to an attempt to overthrow the entire Roman religious order. However, since the response to all of these by the successor could be very similar – to show the respect that his predecessor lacked – I have chosen to categorise them together. Elagabalus and Caligula, and their successors Severus Alexander and Claudius, will be the main case studies here. Caligula represents a perhaps more typical example, in his apparent attempts to deify himself, whereas Elagabalus' introduction of Elagabal to Rome is more unique and certainly worthy of examination. The final segment will cover visual contrast, since this does not relate to any specific ideological trope, but rather attempts to contrast the tyrant with the successor as a whole. In this segment I will discuss the associations of damage by fire and the subsequent restoration to exaggerate differences between the two rulers, as well as the practice of reworking withdrawn statues of tyrants.

Throughout this chapter, the examples of contrast being looked at will almost exclusively be within the timeframe of the social memory of the *damnatio memoriae* event – i.e. before the last person to have witnessed it has died.<sup>536</sup> This is because these represent

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<sup>535</sup> See Gowing (2005), esp p.91, 99-100, 102-4, 121-2, 154-9. The memory of the republic was mutable during the principate, especially when the years of Augustus are compared to those of later emperors, when there was no living memory of the republic remaining. Indeed, the true meaning of many republican concepts, like that of the city as a 'public space', were no longer in living use as they had once been – Russell (2016) p.187-94. These concepts nevertheless remained extremely important in the Roman cultural memory, as Gowing discusses.

<sup>536</sup> See discussion of social memory, cultural memory, and memory figures in the introduction to this thesis.

more distinct instances of contrast, I would argue. More details of the tyrant's deeds, or the destruction after their death, are likely to be remembered in this period as compared to later periods, when only elements which survived into the cultural memory remain likely to be recalled by a viewer. In addition, the personal consequences of these deeds mean that there is a much closer emotive connection to certain spaces or symbols than there would be a century later. It is much easier to be outraged at an act against you or someone you know, than one against Roman society as a whole, which is how it would have been interpreted by those recalling the events much later. This is not to imply that the opportunities presented by contrasting oneself with a denigrated predecessor were not taken advantage of by emperors long after the predecessor's memory was preserved only in the cultural memory of the city. These interactions, however, are certainly very different, and often very problematic, as it needs to be established to what extent different aspects would likely be recalled by the average viewer. A few of these examples will be explored in the next chapter, on appropriation, which deals with case studies which are separated by much longer stretches of time.

#### The *Domus Aurea* and '*Roma reddita*'

The archetypal trope of Roman tyrants is that of an autocratic, selfish, privately focussed ruler. Every emperor under consideration is accused of acting against the people, or the people's representatives, in some way. Indeed, in order to achieve some of the more grievous deeds we hear of, an 'iron fist' is a prerequisite. The opposite quality is also often the defining claim to legitimacy for successors, especially if they were in some way involved in the death of their predecessor. Since this contrast to some extent defines this relationship, then, it is crucial to examine it in detail to understand how the successor taking advantage of it affected the memory of the condemned emperor, as well as that of the successor.

The relationship between the Rome of Nero and that of the Flavians is undoubtedly the most important example to be found within this category. All of the specific Neronian monuments discussed by Martial are considered by modern scholarship to be part of the late Neronian *Domus Aurea* complex – this is the 'one house' that Martial states took over the entire city.<sup>537</sup> There is some debate still on the specifics, as the complex is yet to be entirely excavated (and may never be, as swathes of it lie under later Roman monuments). However, the most important aspect here is how the structure would have been perceived by its

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<sup>537</sup> Mart. *De spect.* 2.4 (Index 10). The 'one house' remark is also referenced in Suetonius as a contemporary saying – Suet. *Nero* 39.2. For overviews of the *Domus Aurea*, see: Boëthius (1960); Griffin (1984) p.126-141; Richardson (1992) p.119-21; Edwards (1993) p.149, 158-9, 170-1; Elsner (1994); Iacopi (1999), *LTUR*, Segala & Sciortino (1999), Panella, Cassatella, Fabbri and Geysen in *LTUR* II (1995) p.63-4; Champlin (2003) p.200-209; Welch (2002); Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.323-9.

contemporaries, so that will be the focus of this brief overview.<sup>538</sup> All our main sources for the great palace share a single interpretation of the structure as overtly lavish and egoistic, with a particular focus on its sheer size.<sup>539</sup> Suetonius attempts to paint a picture of the grandeur of the *domus* by giving specific measurements of its parts, such as the mile-long triple colonnade in its vestibule, which itself could contain the *Colossus Neronis*.<sup>540</sup> He also describes the artificial lake that was part of the complex as ‘like a sea, surrounded by buildings to represent cities’, further drawing attention to the palace’s size by portraying it as fantastically large.<sup>541</sup> This is a sentiment echoed by several other authors. Pliny describes, in two passages, how the *Domus Aurea* ‘encompassed the city’ (*ambientis urbem*), taking this as its defining characteristic.<sup>542</sup> Tacitus takes a more subtle and sarcastic approach, drawing attention to its expanse through its ‘open landscapes’ (*aperta spatia*), favoured simply because the jewels and gold in the palace were not sufficiently fashionable.<sup>543</sup> This then draws attention to the moral outrage regarding *rus in urbe* – how the palace transgressed the natural boundaries between city and country in Roman thought.<sup>544</sup> Martial’s comment that the whole city has become one house (*unaque iam tota stabat in urbe domus*), perhaps itself inspired by an anonymous flyer referenced in Suetonius, has become emblematic of the building.<sup>545</sup> There are also multiple references to the excessive decoration, described by both Suetonius and Pliny as being lined with gold.<sup>546</sup> Tacitus appears to disagree here, saying that, in the palace, the marvels were not as much the gems and gold as the aforementioned vast open expanses.<sup>547</sup> However, upon examination, he is not denying that there was an abundance of gold and gems in the palace, but rather that this was not the most incredible aspect of the palace, thereby implying that these extravagances were simply not enough for Nero. The final point of focus within our sources is on the circumstances which allowed the palace to be constructed, i.e. the fire of AD 64.<sup>548</sup> Suetonius accuses Nero of ordering the demolition of certain granaries in the vicinity of

<sup>538</sup> See Darwall-Smith (1996) p.36-7; Segala & Sciortino (1999) p.10-11; Champlin (2003) p.200-4.

<sup>539</sup> Boatwright (1998) p.79; Champlin (1998) p.333.

<sup>540</sup> Suet. *Nero* 31.1. See discussion of the Colossus in the final chapter of this thesis.

<sup>541</sup> Suet. *Nero* 31.1; Edwards (1993) p.158-9; Iacopi (1999) p.9-11. See Panella (1995) p.51-3 for the archaeological evidence for the *Stagnum Neronis* and its surrounding terraces.

<sup>542</sup> Pliny *HN*. 33.54, 36.111, see Boatwright (1987) p.108-9.

<sup>543</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.42

<sup>544</sup> For *rus in urbe* and the *Domus Aurea*, Elsner (1994) p.122; Boatwright (1998) p.77-80; Chomse (2018) p.398. For the location of the *Domus Aurea* as a transgression in general, Bergmann, M. (1993) p.24; Cassatella (1995a) p.49; Iacopi (1999) p.9; Newby (2012) p.353-4. Pliny the elder (*NH*. 19.50) also comments upon the rise of large gardens in cities in a more clearly disparaging manner; Tacitus is commenting on the *Domus Aurea* as if it is a continuation of this trend – Edwards (1993) p.149.

<sup>545</sup> Mart. *De spect.* 2.4 (Index 10); Suet. *Nero* 39.1; Coleman (2006) p.30; Rimell (2008) p.117-18.

<sup>546</sup> Suet. *Nero* 31.2; Pliny *HN*. 36.111.

<sup>547</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.42; Griffin (1984) p.137-8. Tacitus takes a more subtle approach to the structure overall, praising the architectural merit of the building without explicitly condemning it on any moral grounds.

<sup>548</sup> For the ideological consequences of the damage of this fire in more detail, see below, p.153.

the *Domus Aurea*, using the fire as cover for the act.<sup>549</sup> Tacitus, although he praises Nero's response to the fire overall, and regards this accusation as a mere rumour (*infamia*), says that he nevertheless profited from the destruction by building the *Domus*.<sup>550</sup> Martial, meanwhile, blames the palace complex for the removal of the houses of the poor that had occupied the space on the Oppian prior to its construction.<sup>551</sup>

The archaeological evidence demonstrates that the scale is less exaggerated than one might initially assume.<sup>552</sup> The palace extended from the north-east slope of the Palatine, up to the gardens of Maecenas on top of the Esquiline, incorporating the temple of the deified Claudius on the Caelian, and the vestibule reaching along the *Via Sacra* from the current site of the Colosseum to beyond the arch of Titus (Fig.23).<sup>553</sup> I would certainly agree with Griffin in saying that the evidence is 'sufficiently grandiose' to support many of the claims made by our sources.<sup>554</sup> A judgement of the lavishness of the decoration, including the widespread gilding, is somewhat more difficult to ascertain, as most has been stripped from the remains. The magnificent and excellently preserved frescoes in the Oppian wing are not sufficiently opulent to warrant criticism from our sources, similar decorations being present in the 'House of Augustus' on the Palatine. Indeed, Richardson is critical of their quality, commenting that they seem 'rushed', and not up to the standards of the famous painter who is supposed to have made them.<sup>555</sup> However, we are aware from Pliny that many of the famous works of art contained within Vespasian's *Templum Pacis* were originally held in the reception rooms of the *Domus Aurea*, giving some sense of the luxury of the interior.<sup>556</sup> Indeed, Pliny himself was living in Rome at the time of the *Domus Aurea*'s construction – it is likely that he had the opportunity to personally witness the decorations for himself.<sup>557</sup>

The consensus among modern scholarship is to agree with Tacitus – Nero was not personally responsible for the fire of AD 64.<sup>558</sup> However, there is some evidence which hints at the structures which the *Domus Aurea* replaced. The wing which was later buried by the baths of Trajan incorporates parts of several pre-Neronian *horrea*.<sup>559</sup> Though Suetonius likely

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<sup>549</sup> Suet. *Nero* 38.1.

<sup>550</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.42, 15.44; Griffin (1984) p.129, 132; Edwards (2011) p.652-3.

<sup>551</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.8 (Index 10). As Van Kooten points out, the *Domus Aurea* would have been particularly offensive to Christians, who had been accused by Nero of starting the fire and, according to Tacitus, tortured to death as a result – Van Kooten (2007) p.222-3; Tac. *Ann.* 15.44.

<sup>552</sup> Cassatella (1995a) p.49; Welch (2002) p.124-5.

<sup>553</sup> For the scale of the *Domus Aurea*, see, Richardson (1992) p.119-120; Iacopi (1999) p.7-15; Davies (2000a) p.39-40; Champlin (2003) p.200-204; Claridge (2010) p.302-3.

<sup>554</sup> Griffin (1984) p.138.

<sup>555</sup> Richardson (1992) p.121.

<sup>556</sup> Pliny *HN.* 34.84; Moorman (2003) p.381-2.

<sup>557</sup> Pliny *Ep.* 3.5; French & Greenway (1986) p.6-7; Murphy (2004) p.3-4.

<sup>558</sup> Griffin (1984) p.132; Champlin (2003) p.182-3; Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.323.

<sup>559</sup> Richardson (1992) p.120.

exaggerates Nero's egoism by claiming he destroyed the *horrea* to make room for his palace – it is probable that they were heavily damaged by the fire – the fact remains that the granaries were not restored by Nero, and were instead made permanently unusable by the construction of the building. While the details of their claims may be unverifiable, or even disproven, from what we can determine there is sufficient justification for our sources' disdain.

One key issue which has consequences for the later conception of the building is its intended purpose, which has come into question. Griffin proposed that the palace was intended as a public space, intended for the people to be able to pass through and see Nero in person more regularly, such as in the *Domus'* vestibule, built over the *Via Sacra*.<sup>560</sup> This is contrary to the typical isolation implied by a grand palatial building. The idea is echoed by Champlin, who says that the *Stagnum Neronis* was intended as a public area, and concludes that Nero did not want to make the city his house but rather to construct a grand 'public house', which represents the unity between people and *princeps*.<sup>561</sup> While their arguments are convincing, even if we accept that this was the architects' intent, it does not necessarily imply that this is how it was interpreted by its contemporaries. If we are to accept Champlin's argument that the palace was considered as something separate to the Palatine palace, the juxtaposition of the *Domus Aurea* with the *Domus Tiberiana* would invite comparison.<sup>562</sup> Thus, we ought to compare it to the existing imperial palaces, such as the *Domus Augusta*, and I would agree entirely with Frederick's assessment that the *Domus Aurea* is not something that could have been built by Augustus.<sup>563</sup> Even if the intended comparison were to the gardens of Maecenas, which the Esquiline part of the complex bordered, as Welch points out the transgression of the city's boundaries meant that this would be seen in a different, urban, context.<sup>564</sup> Thus, even if it was intended to be for the public benefit in some way, the outward appearance would have been that Nero was building an enormous private dwelling in the centre of the city, and since it was never fully completed in his lifetime most of it would have been closed off for the majority of the period in which it existed.<sup>565</sup> Furthermore, if the building was at some point recognised as being accessible to the public, this could still be interpreted, or twisted, as simply Nero seeking to serve his own egomania.<sup>566</sup> Nero would thus be serving his own desire to be a public performer, an element of his character which was also

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<sup>560</sup> Griffin (1984) p.140.

<sup>561</sup> Champlin (2003) p.206; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.37-8; Welch (2002) p.127; Flower (2006) p.231. Moorman comments on this argument - Moorman (2003) p.386-7.

<sup>562</sup> Richardson (1992) p.120; Fabbri (1995) p.63-64; Champlin (2003) p.203, 209.

<sup>563</sup> Frederick (2003) p.203; Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.327.

<sup>564</sup> Welch (2002) p.126.

<sup>565</sup> Elsner (1994) p.120; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.38; Iacopi (1999) p.9; Welch (2002) p.126.

<sup>566</sup> Charles (2002) p.35-6; Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.328-9.

regarded as contemptible by our sources.<sup>567</sup> As Griffin in fact states, unsympathetic contemporaries would have interpreted the situation as though the fire 'gave a mortally egocentric autocrat the chance to demand a unique expression of what he considered his worth and position to be'.<sup>568</sup>

The *Domus Aurea* was then an almost perfect opportunity for Vespasian. It was a vast expanse of land in the centre of the city, the current use of which was almost universally condemned and was associated with a condemned emperor, thus making demolition not only permissible, but prestigious and noble.<sup>569</sup> Martial's epigram is an excellent starting point to understand the intent and consequences of the Flavian programme on the site of the *Domus Aurea*.<sup>570</sup> As Coleman observes, the poem is arranged in contrasting couplets.<sup>571</sup> After the first four lines, in which two lines describe the present, and two the past, the poem continues by contrasting the present, then the past, within each couplet. Even at a glance, the triple anaphora of *hic ubi*, which Coleman points out is a typical construct of contrast within a space, informs the reader that spatial juxtaposition and contrast is the key theme of this poem.<sup>572</sup>

The first four lines present several curiosities. The first is that the Colossus is mentioned within the positive, present-day, first two lines.<sup>573</sup> As will be discussed in full in the final chapter, the *Colossus Neronis* was originally commissioned to have Nero's likeness, but by the time Martial was writing it had already been converted into a statue of *Sol* by Vespasian.<sup>574</sup> It is curious, therefore, that the association with Nero is not even mentioned, and its present state is not contrasted with its previous state. If one were to use this poem as one's only source for understanding the relationship between the Flavian-era structures and the *Domus Aurea*, one might assume that the Colossus belonged firmly in the former category. Martial thus entirely forgoes Nero's association with the statue, portraying it as a simple projection of

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<sup>567</sup> Welch (2002) p.128.

<sup>568</sup> Griffin (1984) p.141. Champlin agrees with this conclusion – Champlin (1998) p.343, and (2003) p.206; Elsner (1994) p.116. See also Edwards on the association between extravagant palaces and oriental tyrants and autocrats – Edwards (1993) p.169. Flower points out that the unfinished state of the *Domus Aurea* at the time of Vespasian's accession would have 'made it easier for later ages to put their own construction on what Nero would have built if he had lived' – Flower (2006) p.230. Russell assesses Vespasian and Titus as visibly shifting away from Nero's perceived overly-private role, returning to the model of the emperor being represented as both 'fully public and fully private' simultaneously – Russell (2016) p.193-4.

<sup>569</sup> For Vespasian taking advantage of this position, see Darwall-Smith (1996) p.37-8, 73; Carey (2006) p.172; Flower (2006) p.228-9; Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.325; Closs (2016) p.102; Chomse (2018) p.389-90.

<sup>570</sup> The epigram was most likely composed for the inaugural games of the Colosseum under Titus, but this is not known for certain – Darwall-Smith (1996) p.264-5.

<sup>571</sup> Coleman (1998) p.18-19; Carey (2006) p.173 Coleman (2006) p.15.

<sup>572</sup> Coleman (2006) p.16; Chomse (2018) p.389, 395.

<sup>573</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.1 (Index 10); Chomse (2018) p.390.

<sup>574</sup> Below, p.193.

Vespasian's piety. If we were to treat its transformation as simply the dedication of a colossal statue of the sun, as appears to be the intent, this act of religious piety would still contrast well with the abuse of the temple of the deified Claudius, mentioned later in the epigram. In addition, the elevation of the Colossus, seeming to reach to the heavens, is contrasted with the widespread halls of the *Domus Aurea*.<sup>575</sup> To some extent this emphasis on height as contrasting with the shallowness of the *Domus Aurea* represents simple visual contrast, but the inherent religious connotations of reaching upwards invites a comparison between the Flavians' truly pious ambitions with the earthly and material ones of Nero.<sup>576</sup> The second curiosity is the interpretation of *pegmata* in the second line, translated here as scaffolds. The possibilities are examined thoroughly by Coleman.<sup>577</sup> Either *pegmata* should in fact be interpreted as referring to the stage-equipment used in the Flavian amphitheatre, an interpretation accepted by Cassatella and Panella in the *Lexicon Topographicum*, the masts of the awnings of the Colosseum as suggested by Darwall-Smith, or it could be referring to scaffolding in the modern sense, as a construction aid.<sup>578</sup> If it was scaffolding, it could be referring to otherwise unknown work being done on the surrounding Neronian vestibule, the finishing touches of the amphitheatre, the Arch of Titus, or an unknown structure represented on a coin of Domitian (Fig.24) celebrating his additions to the Colosseum.<sup>579</sup> Coleman agrees with the interpretation of the scaffolding of the arch of Titus, but the word remains fundamentally ambiguous, I would argue.<sup>580</sup> However, this may in fact be Martial's intent. All of the possibilities contrast favourably with the *invidiosa atria* of Nero. The stage-equipment brings the vestibule to some extent within the sphere of influence of the amphitheatre, as does a reference to its scaffolding, reiterating the contrast between the private *Domus Aurea* and the public Colosseum.<sup>581</sup> The arch of Titus is a relatively modest monument to a deified

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<sup>575</sup> The vestibule of the *Domus Aurea*, where the Colossus was located, was not destroyed by Vespasian – Panella & Cassatella (1995) p.50-51.

<sup>576</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.1, 3-4 (Index 10).

<sup>577</sup> Coleman (2006) p.22-27; Coleman (1998) p.19-20. See also Darwall-Smith (1996) p.83-4.

<sup>578</sup> Panella & Cassatella (1995) p.51; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.83-4.

<sup>579</sup> *RIC* II.1 Domitian, no.131. For work on the vestibule, see Boëthius (1952) p.135–6. For the Colosseum, see Rodriguez-Almeida (1994) p.211-17. For the *Arcus Titi*, see Coleman, below, and Platner & Ashby (1929) p.167.

<sup>580</sup> Coleman argues for construction scaffolding based on the use of '*crescunt*' by Martial to describe them, saying that this implies that the *pegmata* were tall structures consisting of wooden boards, and, among other reasons, that the date would fit well with the construction of the Arcus Titi. While *crescunt peggata* does indeed imply a tall 'fixture of boards', I have not seen *pegma* used to describe scaffolding used in construction. To me, therefore, Darwall-Smith's suggestion is the most convincing, taking into account the apparently noteworthy height of the structure and the specifics of the meaning of *pegmata*. Lewis & Short (1879) P.1324; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.83-4; Coleman (2006) p.22-23, 25-26; Chomse (2018) p.395-6.

<sup>581</sup> For more on the interpretations of the Colosseum compared to the *Domus Aurea*, see Davies (2000a) p.41-42.

emperor, built by his successor in honour of him – in contrast to Nero's palace, interpreted as a self-congratulatory award for his own perceived popularity.

The following couplet contrasts the Colosseum with Nero's artificial lake, the *Stagnum Neronis*, though he pluralises the latter to *stagna*, by way of exaggeration of its extent.<sup>582</sup> Again, the contrast here is one of dimensions. The shallowness of the lake is contrasted against the loftiness of the amphitheatre, as emphasised by *conspicui* (seen, with the implication of clearly visible) as well as *erigitur moles*, the latter directly juxtaposed with the *stagna Neronis*.<sup>583</sup> As Chomse points out, this is part of a contrasting element that continues throughout the poem wherein the static nature of the Domus Aurea (here *erant*, elsewhere *stabat* and *radiabant*) is contrasted with the Flavian building programme 'caught in the moment of construction' (here *erigitur*, elsewhere *crescunt*, *velocia munera*). In this way, Chomse argues, Martial captures the optimism and vigour of the Flavian building programme.<sup>584</sup> The public is also contrasted with the private here, as the amphitheatre is expressed simply as 'the amphitheatre' whereas the lake(s) are burdened with *Neronis*, suggesting personal ownership. It would certainly be remiss to not mention Welch's discussion of the dialogue between the *Domus* and the Colosseum here. As she demonstrates, the design of the Colosseum is in several ways a direct riposte to the existence of Nero's palace. The traditional Roman Tuscan order on the ground floor can be seen as a rejection of Nero's philhellenism, as can the use of the structure for amphitheatrical spectacles and 'fatal charades' as opposed to Greek theatre.<sup>585</sup> The inscription on the entrance to the Colosseum, celebrating its construction *ex manubiis* of the sack of Jerusalem then puts the Greek aspects of the structure in a different context.<sup>586</sup> Where Nero had celebrated these and lived in a Greek manner publicly, funded by confiscations from colleagues, the Flavians employed Greek architectural features and statues, innovative for Roman amphitheatres in service to the Roman public and framed these features as spoils of war. The statues, in particular, were visually confined by the arches of the Colosseum.<sup>587</sup> The design of the Colosseum thereby deliberately used visual contrast to further distance itself from its predecessor.

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<sup>582</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.1.5-6 (Index 10); Wiedemann (1992) p.42; Rimell (2008) p.118-9. For the archaeology of the *stagnum's* replacement by the Colosseum, including the possibility that the foundations of the Colosseum re-purposed some of the *stagnum's* associated structures, see Panella (1995) p.53-4; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.78.

<sup>583</sup> Coleman (2006) p.30-32.

<sup>584</sup> Chomse (2018) p.396-7.

<sup>585</sup> Welch (2002) p.132-3. See above, p.88.

<sup>586</sup> *CIL* VI 40454a; See Alföldi (1995), especially p.209-23

<sup>587</sup> Welch (2002) p.133-4. This can be seen in the depiction of the Colosseum on a Domitianic coin – Fig.36. Welch also suggests that the Colosseum's rigid social stratification would have contrasted with the *stagnum Neronis's* supposed public accessibility – Welch (2002) p.133. Even if we could prove that it



Levick, furthermore, draws attention to another element of contrast here.<sup>588</sup> Suetonius quotes a supposedly well-known jibe that was circulating in Nero's time, which exhorts the Romans ('*Quirites*', here) to move to Veii, as Rome had been taken over by one house.<sup>589</sup> This is clearly a reference to an event following the sack of 390 BC, in which Livy reports that the Tribunes of the Plebs were exhorting the Roman people to migrate to Veii and Camillus made a speech to argue against this proposal.<sup>590</sup> The use of the archaising term *Quirites* makes the reference to this event very clear.<sup>591</sup> If the fire of AD 64 and the subsequent 'conquest' of the city by the *Domus Aurea* is read as an analogy of the sack of Rome in this way, this gives the construction of the Colosseum *ex manubiis* extra weight.<sup>592</sup> As the *Domus Aurea* was interpreted as a monument to Rome's greatest defeat, the Colosseum acted as a monument to its contemporary victories, both over the Jews and over Nero's tyranny itself.

Martial then turns his attention to the north, contrasting the Baths of Titus with the *Domus Aurea*'s Oppian wing, which had 'robbed the poor of their dwellings' (Fig.25).<sup>593</sup> Clearly, the baths, a building which not only benefited the poor directly by providing them a service which they would otherwise lack access to, would contrast directly with the destruction of their houses to build a private palace. As Coleman points out, there is even direct contrast within the description of the Oppian wing – *superbus* ('arrogant') is the polar opposite of *miseris* (poor, with a sense of humility).<sup>594</sup> The contrast between Vespasian's restoration, and completion, of the Temple of Claudius on the Caelian and Nero's incorporation of the site into the *Domus Aurea* comprises the next two lines.<sup>595</sup> Vespasian's honouring of Claudius clearly places himself against Nero, who clearly disrespected his deified predecessor's legacy.<sup>596</sup>

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was intended for public use in this way, it does not seem to be as universally favourable for the Flavians as some of the other deliberate examples of contrast we see. It is also, evidently, not an aspect of the *Domus Aurea* which is criticised in our sources. Indeed, if anything, the *Domus Aurea* received ire for exacerbating the gap between the imperial family and the general populace.

<sup>588</sup> Levick (2017) p.136-7.

<sup>589</sup> Suet. *Nero* 39.2 – *Roma domus fiet; Veios migrate, Quirites, Si non et Veios occupat ista domus.* ('Rome is becoming one house; head to Veii, Romans, if Veii is not yet occupied by that house').

<sup>590</sup> Livy 5.49, 53.

<sup>591</sup> This, and the use of the verb *migrare*, as used by Livy extensively in his account, suggests to me that this remark could have been a direct parody of a well-known remark from the time of the sack of Rome.

<sup>592</sup> Levick (2017) p.136-7.

<sup>593</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.1.7-8 (Index 10). The Baths of Titus did not entirely subsume this block of the *Domus Aurea*, for details see Caruso (1999) p.66-7. The remaining part of the block was used as the foundations to the later baths of Trajan, which were, at least, began by Domitian's time – Caruso & Volpe (1999) p.67-9.

<sup>594</sup> Coleman (2006) p.34.

<sup>595</sup> Moorman suggests that the temple may not have been begun by the time it became the *nymphaeum* of the *Domus Aurea*, but rightfully points out that the Flavians 'did not refrain from accusing Nero for stopping the construction of a temple dedicated to his honourable uncle Claudius' – Moorman (2003) p.383-5.

<sup>596</sup> Levick (2017) p.135. For the use of the Temple of Claudius as a monumental fountain by Nero, see Buzzeti (1993) p.277-8; Panella (1995) p.53; Segala & Sciortino (1999) p.12.

Additionally, the tautology of *ultima pars aulae deficientis* ('outermost part of the palace's end', literally) emphasises the incredible scale of the *Domus* and thus portrays the incorporation of the temple complex as trivial, and certainly unnecessary.<sup>597</sup> We also ought not to dismiss the shade mentioned by Martial as a simple literary device either, as Coleman points out, since this would be a 'valuable amenity' in such a warm climate, and its sacrifice for the sake of Nero's palace would not have been seen favourably.<sup>598</sup>

The poem ends with a summary of the primary message behind these constructions – one of contrast between the public works of the Flavians and the private ones of Nero.<sup>599</sup> The final line is of particular importance. Not only does it explicitly state this goal, but it also, through the use of *fuerant* and the genitive, emphasises a difference in ownership as a key point of contrast. It also concludes the entire poem by referring to Nero as a *Dominus*, a master of a *Domus*, and thus another veiled reference to the *Domus Aurea*, implying the structure is fully representative of his legacy.<sup>600</sup> It should be noted that, despite the impression given by the epigram of Martial, the *Domus Aurea* was not systematically destroyed following the accession of Vespasian. On the contrary, much of the building remained. The best preserved remains, in the Esquiline wing, contain evidence of later re-use - the western block of this wing was seemingly repurposed as a warehouse or a barracks.<sup>601</sup> Davies argues that, since this indicates that there was no systematic destruction, Vespasian's later use of the space 'has little to do with *damnatio*', and that the buildings he constructed over the *Domus Aurea* should be read as an 'improvement', meant to appeal to Nero's supporters.<sup>602</sup> Though she dismisses Martial as being more concerned with flattery than denigrating Nero, it seems to me that if such flattery necessarily involves the denigration of Nero, then this indicates that the contrast between the Flavians and Nero is very important to the Flavians' imperial identity.<sup>603</sup> In addition, even if we accept the theory of a 'public' *Domus Aurea*, the universal condemnation of the palace in our sources implies that there was no attempt to rehabilitate it, the favoured strategy apparently having been to draw upon its luxury and size to condemn it as a selfish extravagance, whether that was true or not.

Martial is not exhaustive in his summary of the contrasting elements of Neronian and Flavian Rome, however. Dio also notes how Vespasian chose to directly contrast his use of the

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<sup>597</sup> Coleman (2006) p.34-5; Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.317.

<sup>598</sup> Coleman (2006) p.34.

<sup>599</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.11-12 (Index 10).

<sup>600</sup> Coleman (2006) p.36.

<sup>601</sup> Pliny *NH.* 36.4.37; Davies (2000a) p.40. For the details of the interventions in this wing of the *Domus Aurea*, see Fabbrini (1995) p.61; Segala & Sciortino (1999) p.14-15.

<sup>602</sup> Davies (2000a) p.40-42.

<sup>603</sup> Davies (2000a) p.41.

spaces in Rome with Nero. Dio relates that the emperor spent most of his time in the Gardens of Sallust, receiving anyone who wanted to see him, while the gates of the Palatine palace were left open for visitors to come and go.<sup>604</sup> Not only did he contrast himself with Nero by being seen to live more modestly then, but by making a point to open the palace gates and allowing anyone to see him in the gardens of Sallust whilst demolishing and condemning the *Domus Aurea*, he implies that Nero wished to isolate himself. Whether or not the intended reception of the *Domus Aurea* had been that it was open to the public, therefore, he cemented the interpretation that it was a selfish private luxury in the centre of the city. One key structure that is not mentioned, and that connects quite closely to the *Domus Aurea* is the *Templum Pacis*, Vespasian's addition to the imperial *fora* complex. As has been mentioned, Pliny informs us that many of the works of art which had been placed within the *Domus Aurea* were transferred to this new building after it was completed, and this is supported by the discovery of statue bases of the statues he mentions at the site of the *Templum*.<sup>605</sup> This brings the *Templum Pacis* into the wider scheme of building atop the ruins of the *Domus*, and furthers the message of restoring to the public what had been made private by Nero.<sup>606</sup> There is an irony in this procedure, as the objects which had been 'violently looted' (*violenta convecta*) by Nero were subsequently looted by Vespasian, though with entirely different motivations.<sup>607</sup> Welch also points out that the architectural style of the *Templum Pacis* also contrasts with that of the *Domus Aurea*, the former being rigidly bordered, where the *Domus Aurea* was much more open-ended.<sup>608</sup>

There is also the less-considered example of the *Amphitheatrum Neronis*, a wooden structure in the Campus Martius detailed by Pliny.<sup>609</sup> Though the structure was impressive to Pliny for its awnings, the comparison between a wooden amphitheatre and the largest stone amphitheatre in the world would not be a favourable one for Nero.<sup>610</sup> In the context of the *Domus Aurea*, it would have seemed like Nero had been willing to spend a great deal more on the construction of his house than on buildings for the public good, with Vespasian of course

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<sup>604</sup> Dio 65.10.4-6; Edwards (1993) p.170.

<sup>605</sup> Pliny *HN*. 34.45, 35.120; Procop. *Goth*. 8.21.10-16; Anderson (1984) p.106; Casatella (1995) p.50; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.61; Segala & Sciortino (1999) p.41-5; La Rocca (2001) p.196-99; Kalas (2015) p.65-66; Newby (2016) p.35-6.

<sup>606</sup> Noreña (2003) p.28. Welch claims that the statues would be less accessible in the *Templum Pacis*, in fact, than in the *Domus Aurea*, as the former was sometimes closed and would be explored in a more regimented manner as a result – Welch (2002) p.129. This is based not only on the assumption that the *Domus Aurea* was publicly accessible, but also that the statues were originally placed in the gardens of the *Domus*.

<sup>607</sup> See also Tac. *Ann*. 15.45 for more of Nero's looting of temples, and Joseph. *BJ*. 7.5.7 for more of the *Templum Pacis* as an attempt to 'democratise' art. Boëthius (1960) p.115.

<sup>608</sup> Welch (2002) p.129.

<sup>609</sup> Pliny *HN*. 16.200; Richardson (1992) p.10-11; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.73.

<sup>610</sup> Pliny *HN*. 19.24.

having done the opposite. Along the same lines was the *Circus Vaticanus*. This was a *circus* on the Vatican that was begun by Caligula and, as implied by the name given to it by Pliny – *Circus Gaii et Neronis* – either completed or extensively modified by Nero.<sup>611</sup> The *circus* was used by Nero following the fire of AD 64 as the venue for the gruesome execution of Christians, according to Tacitus.<sup>612</sup> Following Nero's death, the *circus* is only mentioned again under Elagabalus, when it is said that Elagabalus raced elephants in the Vatican, and required the removal of tombs that were obstructing the route. This implies that the Vatican *circus* was out of use for some time, and probably given over to general public use by Vespasian.<sup>613</sup> This would add another building to Vespasian's tally, and spread the message of giving back to the public what Nero had taken to encompass even the outskirts of the city.

This case study is indeed exceptional. The text of Martial provides us with valuable insight into the perception of deliberate attempts to contrast a successor with a condemned predecessor, and attests to the effects this had on the predecessor's memory. In this case, Vespasian's public building programme successfully took advantage of the remains of the *Domus Aurea* to promote himself and his dynasty as public benefactors, and further denigrate Nero as a selfish, egocentric autocrat. This scheme would have also meant that the memory of the *Domus Aurea* became entangled with that of the buildings which replaced it – the Colosseum, Colossus and baths became monuments to the defeat of Nero's ego. Half a century later, Dio Chrysostom uses the *Domus Aurea* in a speech on the beautification of the city of Prusa in Bithynia:

ἐγὼ γὰρ ὁμνυμι τοὺς θεοὺς ὑμῖν ἅπαντας, ἥ μὴν ἀντὶ τοῦ λυπεῖν ὑμᾶς ἢ τινὰς ὑμῶν ἢ δοκεῖν βαρὺς οὐκ ἂν ἐλοίμην ἰδιά μοι γενέσθαι τὰ Δαρείου βασιλεία ἢ τὰ Κροίσου ἢ τὴν οἰκίαν τὴν πατρῶαν τὴν ἐμὴν χρυσῇν τῷ ὄντι, ἀλλὰ μὴ ὥσπερ ὀνόματι μόνον τὴν τοῦ Νέρωνος καλοῦσιν. οὐδὲ γὰρ ὄφελος οὐδὲν οἰκίας χρυσοῦς, οὐ μᾶλλον ἢ χύτρας χρυσοῦς ἢ τῆς πλατάνου τῆς ἐν Πέρσῃ.

For I swear to you by all the gods, if it meant paining you, or any among you, or being thought a nuisance, I should not choose to have for my very own the palace of Dareius or of Croesus, or to have my own ancestral dwelling golden in very truth instead of in name alone like the house of Nero. For there is no advantage in a golden house any more than there is in a golden pot or in the Persian plane tree.<sup>614</sup>

<sup>611</sup> Pliny *NH*. 16.201, 36.74, Suet. *Claud.* 21.1; Richardson (1992) p.6-7; Barrett (2014) p.226-231. Tacitus also refers to '[Nero]'s circus', which must be the Vatican one – Tac. *Ann.* 14.14.1, 15.44.1.

<sup>612</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 15.44.

<sup>613</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 23.1; Barrett (2014) p.229-30.

<sup>614</sup> Dio Chrys. *Or.* 47.15, Trans. Lamar Crosby, H. (1946).

Dio Chrysostom uses the *Domus Aurea* as a counterpoint to the proper approach to city planning, to further emphasise his point that stately palaces should not come in the way of the people.<sup>615</sup> The use of Nero's palace here demonstrates the success of the Flavian's approach, and the consequences it had for Nero's memory.

#### Contrast in the *damnationes memoriae* of Domitian and Commodus

As has been stated, this particular interaction is, of course, not the only significant instance of deliberate and marked contrast between the material legacy of a tyrannical predecessor and the successors' actions in Rome. As we have seen, especially significant monuments, ones emblematic of the rule of the tyrant, left their mark on the cultural memory of the city, and any subsequent material that shared its space had to contend with this memory. With this in mind, it is worth examining the afterlives of monuments that have already been discussed in the previous section. One of these, the *Equus Domitiani*, embodies, arguably, similar ideological tropes as the earlier *Domus Aurea* of Nero – autocracy, anti-republicanism and self-glorification. While the statue itself was certainly affected by the *damnatio*, if not outright destroyed, we cannot assume that this meant that it no longer had an effect on the place where it once stood. Evidently, the base endured beyond the year 96, and with it the memory of the statue and its destruction. While we have no mention of it in our sources, there is some archaeological evidence which may suggest later re-use of the statue base. However, we might speculate on a number of different approaches which Nerva himself, or his successors in the subsequent dynasty, could have had to the statue base. If a conscious choice was made to leave the base empty, potentially with surviving remnants of the statue, then this could have had a number of effects over time. This could have acted as the monumentalisation of the absence, or the hatred, of the statue. The preservation of this vestige of a monument to Domitian's hubris, and the repercussions thereof, could serve as a vow to the public. The successor emperor declares that he is fully aware of the consequences of overstepping the bounds of his power and will be careful to avoid doing so. A structure in the centre of perhaps the most public place in Rome which no-one would wish to care for, clean or defend against vandals may have become a magnet for graffiti by the people. The proximity of the statue of Marsyas – an ancient example of the 'talking statues' phenomenon of later Rome – may have served to inspire such graffiti, if so.<sup>616</sup> If this was the case, there would have been clear contrast between the former statue of an oppressive tyrant, and its subsequent transformation into a vehicle for the expression of public opinion.

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<sup>615</sup> Griffin (1984) p.137.

<sup>616</sup> Fantham (2005) p.227. For the talking statues of modern Rome, such as Pasquino and Marforio, see Barkan (1999) p.210-231.

While abandonment is a possibility, it is more likely that the base was 'put to another use', as Giuliani remarks.<sup>617</sup> However, this does not mean that the aforementioned consequences of abandonment should be ignored, as prior to reconstruction the base would be in an abandoned state for some years. Clearly, the most obvious option would be that it was re-used as a statue base for a different statue.<sup>618</sup> In order to prevent accusations of hypocrisy, the replacement statue ought to have been relatively modest, at least in the short term. A modest statue contrasted with the large base and the memory of the colossal statue would serve to emphasise the reigning successor's virtue of humility. This usurpation of what had been the prime symbol of Domitian's rule in the city would have also represented the successor taking part in the *damnatio memoriae* which had been the founding event of the illustrious Antonine dynasty. On the relief of the *Anaglypha Traiani* (or *Hadriani*), a statue which appears to commemorate the institution of the *alimenta* appears in the centre of the forum.<sup>619</sup> Torelli follows Lugli in making the suggestion that this 'very likely occupied the area of the *Equus Domitiani*', and that it is represented on Trajanic coins (Fig.26).<sup>620</sup> The relief (Fig.27) shows the placement of the statue in the context of the forum, and we know that the statue base survived Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*. Considering both of these, it leaves little doubt that, if the statue group existed, that the statue was placed on the former base of the *Equus*.

The scale depicted on the *Anaglypha Traiani* implies that the statue was not colossal, and so would represent this comparative humility well. The fact that the statue depicts the *alimenta* is also very significant, as this was one part of a series of popular legislation aimed at relieving poverty, which, as Hammond states, was 'part of the 'republican' reaction against Domitian's tyranny'.<sup>621</sup> If a statue commemorating such legislation replaced what would have been, in the minds of many, the symbol of Domitian's tyranny, this message of contrast would have been even more powerful. The proximity of this statue group to the statue of Marsyas would also have emphasised the *alimenta* as representing the extension of plebeian *libertas* to

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<sup>617</sup> Giuliani (1995) p.229.

<sup>618</sup> See Højte for the re-use of statue bases following *damnatio memoriae* – Højte (2005) p.56-62.

<sup>619</sup> See Hammond (1953) and Torelli (1982). Note the debate on the dating of the *Anaglypha* as summarised by Boatwright (1987) p.182-3 n.3, 186-91. Due to the apparently deliberate obliteration of the faces on the relief – see Rüdiger (1973) p.165 – the relief is impossible to date securely beyond 'late Trajanic or early Hadrianic' on stylistic grounds. The location of these reliefs has also been debated, though the suggestions made thus far have been convincing. As Boatwright states, 'without new evidence, the questions of the original location, purpose and date of the *Anaglypha* must remain unanswered'.

<sup>620</sup> Torelli (1982) p.91; Lugli (1947) p.107; RIC II.2 Trajan nos. 461-2; Boatwright (1987) p.187; Filippi (2017) p.175-6. Hammond (1953) p.175-6, whom Torelli cites, considers the fact that it occupied the same space as the *Equus* as a possibility but does not settle for it, concluding that the 'size and location of the statue group must be left unanswered'.

<sup>621</sup> Hammond (1953) p.149.

the rest of Italy, again contrasting with Domitian's autocratic reputation.<sup>622</sup> Another proposal for the re-use of the colossal statue base, derived from the discovery of an inscription near to the plinth, is that Trajan converted it into a speaker's platform.<sup>623</sup> This would have had a similar effect as the statue depicting the *alimenta*, celebrating *libertas* and highlighting republican values, as well as promoting the voice of the people, with the proximity of Marsyas being equally significant in this case. Furthermore, this proposal, and the proposal that the *Equus* was replaced with the statue of the *alimenta* are not mutually exclusive, because the *alimenta* statue was not on a colossal scale and thus likely only occupied part of the colossal plinth of the *Equus*.<sup>624</sup> The combination of both the *alimenta* statue and the speaker's platform would have amplified the republican associations, and thus the contrast with Domitian, of the new monument.

The eventual re-use and renovation of the plinth for the *Equus Severi* would have been the ultimate reversal of the colossal statue.<sup>625</sup> In contrast to the detailed description provided by Statius for the *Equus Domitiani*, we must rely entirely on Herodian's brief description, as well as coins thought to depict the statue, for the *Equus Severi* (Fig.28).<sup>626</sup> Herodian states that the statue was set up to commemorate a dream which Severus had upon Pertinax's accession, in which a horse had thrown off the new emperor at the *Comitium*, then picked up Severus and carried him to the centre of the Forum to be admired by the people.<sup>627</sup> He claims that the 'huge bronze statue' was set up in that spot in the centre.<sup>628</sup> As mentioned previously, Giuliani suggests, on the basis of the AD 203 repaving of the forum allowing an approach to the base, that the statue base of the *Equus Domitiani* was re-used for the *Equus Severi*.<sup>629</sup> Severus wished to link his dynasty to the prestigious Antonine dynasty, and taking over this monument of Domitian outright would have continued their 'tradition' of condemning Domitian. The fact that the statue is specifically commemorating the moment of the omen of his destiny for the imperial throne further cements this – he is aligning the

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<sup>622</sup> Torelli (1982) p.105-6.

<sup>623</sup> *CIL* VI 40502; Lugli (1947) p.107-10; Hammond (1953) p.176; Rüdiger (1973) p.161.

<sup>624</sup> Lugli (1947) p.108; Hammond (1953) p.176.

<sup>625</sup> It should be noted that this possibility, and the possibility that the base was re-used for the statue representing the *alimenta*, are to some extent incompatible. As discussed in the introduction to the following chapter (p.160), the removal or destruction of the works of deified predecessors was frowned upon, making a second change in the use of the *Equus Domitiani*'s plinth questionable. Cf. Filippi (2017) p.179.

<sup>626</sup> *RIC* IV.1 Septimius Severus, no.169; Lusnia (2014) p.69-70.

<sup>627</sup> Herodian 2.9.5-6.

<sup>628</sup> Herodian 2.9.6. See Thomas and Lusnia for theories on where the exact spot might be, based on Herodian's description of the path the horse had taken – Thomas (2004) p.30-31; Lusnia (2014) p.69-70.

<sup>629</sup> Giuliani (1995) p.229; Lusnia (2014) p.70-71; above, p.95. Coarelli proposes an alternate location, nearer to the Arch of Septimius Severus, but it is entirely unsupported – see Coarelli (1995) p.231-2; Lusnia (2014) p.72.

ascendance of his dynasty with that of the Antonines.<sup>630</sup> This would also have linked Severus to Nerva, from whom he claimed to descend. In addition, many of Domitian's monuments which surrounded the forum were still standing in the Severan period, and so the *Equus Severi* could be seen as the fulcrum for these as the *Equus Domitiani* had been originally. If so, the *Equus Severi* could be seen as Severus 'conquering' Domitian's building programme, something also represented by his restoration programme as discussed below.<sup>631</sup> Severus could also worry somewhat less about being accused of hypocrisy on account of the new statue's similar colossal scale, considering that the appearance of the *Equus Domitiani* had faded from living memory. The *Equus Domitiani* could continue to be exploited by successor regimes long after the statue itself had been completely destroyed, as the memory of what the base once carried continued to give it symbolic strength.

It is significantly more difficult to draw contrast between the monuments of Commodus discussed earlier and the monuments of his successors. As will be discussed in chapter 5, Commodus had converted the *Colossus Neronis* to represent himself in the guise of Hercules.<sup>632</sup> Whoever was responsible for its subsequent restoration, be it Pertinax or Severus, would clearly benefit. In much the same way as Vespasian drew attention to his comparative respect for true Roman religion when he converted the image of Nero into that of *Sol*, they would have done so, and would have been condemning Commodus' ego with the same stroke. Severus' work in the forum would have also contrasted well with the statue of Commodus as a hunter that had been situated there, and would have further emphasised the importance of the statue of *libertas* that replaced it.<sup>633</sup> The archaeological record also preserves his restoration of the pavement of the forum, while respecting the inscription of the Augustan-era praetor Surdinus.<sup>634</sup> This clearly draws a link between Severus and Augustus, whose respect for the senate and republican institutions was lauded by contemporaries.<sup>635</sup> The Arch of Septimius Severus could also be compared to this statue, as it demonstrates diverging methods of asserting legitimacy. Rather than through threats and boasting of his personal prowess in the arena, Severus demonstrated his prowess in war and the benefits it brought the Roman people.<sup>636</sup>

There is one significant element which Pertinax, Commodus' immediate successor, could take advantage of, in inscriptions. The extensive list of titles and names Commodus

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<sup>630</sup> Lusnia (2014) p.73.

<sup>631</sup> Below, p.171.

<sup>632</sup> Below, p.203.

<sup>633</sup> Above, p.109.

<sup>634</sup> *CIL* VI 1468.

<sup>635</sup> Kalas (2015) p.2-5.

<sup>636</sup> Kalas (2015) p.5



adopted for himself, and his renaming of the months of the year, and even the name of the city, were the subject of harsh criticism after his death.<sup>637</sup> By contrast, Pertinax did not even introduce himself into the Antonine dynasty, and thus did not inherit a list of deified ancestors which he ought to mention on inscriptions, and we can assume that he also restored the names of the months and the city to what they had been before Commodus, as they are not used after Commodus' death. Though Pertinax's imperial titles would certainly have been visible to his contemporaries on placards and painted notices in the city, due to the shortness of his reign no large public inscriptions have survived that we could directly compare to those of Commodus. However, on two inscriptions recording the acts of the Arval Brethren, we can see the imperial titles of both emperors used in the same *pro salute* formula, enabling a direct comparison.<sup>638</sup> This direct form of contrast would survive even the *damnatio memoriae* of Commodus, as one could clearly see the length of Commodus' titles, and likely identify that they were his despite the erasure of *Commodo*. Pertinax's inscriptions, therefore, would stand in dramatic contrast with those of Commodus, and portray Pertinax as modest, honest and respectful to his ancestors.<sup>639</sup> Commodus, meanwhile, would be further denigrated as self-obsessed, egoistic and arrogant. It is otherwise difficult to determine any particular instances of direct spatial juxtaposition within the city due to the lack of building work on both their parts. However, as Ando points out, the public sale of Commodus' imperial possessions 'both raised money and very publicly repudiated the persona of his predecessor.'<sup>640</sup> The public nature of these sales – Dio says they took place in the *πωλητήριον* ('auction room') – would have enabled contrast to be drawn between the physical remnants of Commodus' regime and the virtue of Pertinax's actions.

### Ideological contrast and material appropriation

Finally, one should also consider that the memory of the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* would also serve to intensify the interpretation of certain things in the immediate aftermath. The presence of these memories within the social memory would have meant that events in the next forty years could have been seen in the context of what had occurred during the *damnatio memoriae*. For Domitian, these memories would be strongest in the first few years

<sup>637</sup> Speidel (1993) p.109-12.

<sup>638</sup> For Commodus, *CIL VI 2099 – Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) M(arco) Aurelio [[Commodo]] Antonino Aug(usto) Pio Sarmat(ico) / Germ(anico) maximo p(ontifici) m(aximo) p(atri) p(atriciae) co(n)s(uli) IIII Optimo Maximoque principi divi M(arci) Anto/nini fil(io) divi Antonini nepoti divi Hadriani pronepoti divi Traiani / Parthici abnepoti divi Nervae adnepoti*.

For Pertinax, *CIL VI 2102, from 193 – [Im]p(eratori) Caes(ari) P(ublio) Helvio / [Pertinaci] Aug(usto) tribunic(ia) potest(ate) co(n)s(uli) II p(ontifici) m(aximo) princip(i) senat(us) p(atri)] p(atriciae) imperio potest(ati)*.

<sup>639</sup> Campbell (2008) p.1.

<sup>640</sup> SHA *Pert.* 7.8; Ando (2012) p.20. Cassius Dio states that part of the reason this was done was to expose the deeds of the deceased emperor – Dio 74.5.

following the event, i.e. the entirety of Nerva's reign. A good exploration of this idea, then, is the coinage of Nerva in the context of the melting down of Domitian's statues.

We ought to return to the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, then, to establish to what extent melting down statues played a part. That the statues were melted down, and that their destruction was witnessed, is attested to by both our main sources on the *damnatio* spectacle – Pliny and Juvenal. Pliny describes how the general populace witnessed and took part in the melting down of Domitian's statues, and Juvenal calls attention to the melting down of statues as one of the key elements of this spectacle.<sup>641</sup> Both treat this recycling process as the final objective of the scenes of destruction, and almost as a signal that the attacks, at least against the particular effigy in question, are over. In Juvenal, this is demonstrated by the lines in which Sejanus is thrown into the fire and melted down into pots and pans. These are the last lines where Juvenal is speaking as a detached narrator, before assuming the role of a contemporary participant in the following line by using the imperative '*pone*' (place/set up), whereas Pliny straightforwardly utilises '*postremo*' ('finally'). The finality of this recycling process would mean that it would be a particularly memorable part of the *damnatio* process, as perhaps confirmed by the attention it receives in these texts. Neither of these texts, however, are useful in determining exactly what this material was used for. Juvenal appears to list only the metallic items that were most degrading to Sejanus, or any member of the Roman elite who had arrogantly assumed his fame would be eternal. Pliny goes in the other direction, saying that they will be turned into 'something for mankind's use and enjoyment' (*usum hominum ac voluptates*), as a virtuous reversal of the symbols of terror that they had been previously.

There is one more source, however, which mentions the melting down of Domitian's statues.

μετὰ δὲ Δομιτιανὸν Νέρουαν Κοκκήιον οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι ἀπέδειξαν αὐτοκράτορα.  
μίσει δὲ τοῦ Δομιτιανοῦ αἱ εἰκόνες αὐτοῦ, πολλαὶ μὲν ἀργυραὶ πολλαὶ δὲ καὶ  
χρυσαῖ οὔσαι, συνεχωνεύθησαν, καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν μεγάλα χρήματα συνελέγη...

'After Domitian, the Romans appointed Nerva Cocceius emperor. Because of the hatred felt for Domitian, his images, many of which were of silver and many of gold, were melted down; and from this source large amounts of money were obtained...'<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> Pliny *Pan.* 52.3-5 (Index 5); Juv. *Sat.* 10.61-4 (Index 6); Stewart (2003) p.280; Mattusch (2015) p.152-3.

<sup>642</sup> Dio.68.1.1.

This leaves us with two interpretations of his statement. Either the statues were melted down into coinage, or the materials resulting from their melting down were sold to raise money. The text is little help here - the phrase *καὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν* ('and from this source') is entirely unhelpful in distinguishing between these two interpretations. The passive verb *συνελέγη* implies the sense of 'collected together', but again this could be argued to favour either viewpoint. Grainger favours the view that the statues were directly melted down into coinage, and that this act allowed him to reduce taxes in the early years of his reign.<sup>643</sup> Butcher, meanwhile, preserves the ambiguity of the source in his response to it, and says that Dio is indicating that Nerva was not inheriting a financial crisis that he needed to desperately solve, but rather selflessly shuns luxuries in favour of benefiting the people.<sup>644</sup> There are some metallurgical issues with the literal 'melting down into coinage' interpretation, however. Chiefly, the bronze statues of Domitian that were melted down would not have been able to be recycled into brass *sestertii*, or similar denominations, at least not directly, and not without great difficulty. Gold and silver statues, on the other hand, can be much more easily recycled into coinage. The metallurgical analysis done by Butcher and Ponting on Nerva's silver coinage does not exclude the possibility that some of the bullion that was used to produce them was derived from recycled early imperial and republican coins.<sup>645</sup> If some of Domitian's statues had been made of these recycled coins, metal derived from them would be indistinguishable in the chemical record from metal derived directly from melted down coins. Regardless of the truth of the matter, I think it is likely that those with memories of the spectacle would assume that the melting of the statues produced material used in Nerva's coinage. If one day a citizen witnessed a metal statue being melted down, and soon afterward encountered a new issue of coinage made of a similar-looking metal, then they would logically connect the two events in their mind, leading to a, perhaps incorrect, assumption about the source of the metal used to produce the coins. Even if this were not the case, or the citizen in question had sufficient metallurgical knowledge to disprove that assumption, then the selling off of the material and the money raised then being used to produce coinage, would have had similar symbolic resonance.

The transformation of the gold and silver statues into coinage already has significant symbolic power. They were infamous in our sources, including Pliny, for their sheer overwhelming number, meaning that their destruction and recycling would have been most influential in the collective memory.<sup>646</sup> They had become a symbol of Domitian's autocracy, and their destruction would have symbolised the liberation of the city of Rome from its

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<sup>643</sup> Grainger (2003) p.54.

<sup>644</sup> Butcher & Ponting (2014) p.409.

<sup>645</sup> Butcher & Ponting (2014) p.409-15.

<sup>646</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 13.2; Eutropius *Brev.* 7.23; Pliny *Pan.* 52.3 (Index 5).

*dominus*. This association would also lend particular weight to the messages promoted on this first issue of Nerva's coinage. These coins included celebrations of *LIBERTAS PUBLICA*, *SALUS PUBLICA* (Fig.29), and *AEQUITAS AUGUSTI*, all promoting Nerva as a 'liberator' and the narrative of the people being rescued from the oppressive reign of Domitian.<sup>647</sup> Such anti-Domitianic messages would carry much more weight when a great number of the people who saw them would have witnessed first-hand, or otherwise known, that the manufacture of the coins themselves could have derived from an act of condemnation of his memory. This would further denigrate Domitian as an autocrat and support Nerva and the senate's narrative of acting as 'liberators'. This part of Domitian's negative identity, as an oppressive despot, and an enemy of freedom, is thus augmented by Nerva's capitalisation on the spectacle of Domitian's *damnatio memoriae*.

The melting down of these gold and silver statues also enhances the economic messages Nerva was promoting in his reign. As was mentioned in the first chapter, part of the narrative against Domitian was that he had frivolously wasted money on luxuries and public games, leaving the imperial treasury in a state of financial crisis by the end of his reign.<sup>648</sup> The melting down of Domitian's statues into coinage would have been a direct representation of Nerva cleanly undoing the financial damage that Domitian had done to the Roman people with his wasteful and autocratic projects in the city, as Butcher suggests.<sup>649</sup> Grainger's suggestion that it directly, and truthfully, allowed Nerva to lower taxes in the early years of his reign is to some degree unprovable, as we are unable to estimate what sort of relative financial impact these two measures had on the treasury.<sup>650</sup> However, perhaps his assertion demonstrates the psychological power of the association of these events. If Grainger, an impartial, well-informed, modern scholar felt confident in causally joining these two events, then perhaps a less educated or illiterate Roman citizen would have done the same. The melting down of the gold and silver statues would thus have reinforced Nerva's narrative that Domitian was financially incompetent, selfish or wasteful. This is also something of a trope in discussion of the lives of tyrants – Commodus is also said to have been financially wasteful, and the melting down of his statues would have had similar connotations as a result.<sup>651</sup>

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<sup>647</sup> *BMCRE* III Nerva, nos 46-47, 60-61, 91, 94, 96\*, 98\*, 112, 126, 131, 135, 135-136, 138\*, 143†; *RIC* II.2 Nerva, nos 7, 19, 31, 36, 64, 76, 86, 100, for *Libertas Publica*, *BMCRE* nos. 1-3, 23-24, 52, 139; *RIC* nos 1, 13, 25, 37, 51, 77, 94, for *Aequitas Augusti*, nos 16-21 48-49 62 138†; *RIC* nos 9, 20, 33, for *Salus Publica*; Mattingly (1936) p.Xxxvii-xxxix, p.xliii-xlv; Hannestad (1988) p.145; Grainger (2003) p.47 – *Libertas publica* had been celebrated by the senate upon the death of Domitian. Burnett comments upon Vespasian and Titus' response to Nero's coinage, a similar expression of republican ideas – Burnett (1987) p.76.

<sup>648</sup> See above, p.52.

<sup>649</sup> Butcher & Ponting (2014) p. 409.

<sup>650</sup> Grainger (2003) p.54.

<sup>651</sup> Garzetti (1974) p.541-2.

Nerva also issued a set of restitution coins, in silver.<sup>652</sup> While Domitian had done something similar, and in fact on a much larger scale, Nerva's restitution coins are unique in that they are exclusively restorations of Augustan coins (e.g Fig.30).<sup>653</sup> This could be directly interpreted as another anti-Domitianic message, implying that Domitian was not following Augustus' legacy, and that it needed to be restored.<sup>654</sup> Komnick argues that Nerva focused on Augustus in this way as Nerva saw him as a model and wished to be associated with him as such.<sup>655</sup> Nerva was distantly related to Augustus, also had no male heirs, and they were both buried in Augustus' mausoleum.<sup>656</sup> However, when the historical connotations are considered, the message gains a further layer of meaning, as Augustus had melted down silver statues of himself and transformed them into tripods dedicated to Palatine Apollo.<sup>657</sup> The prominence of these tripods in Augustan art likely means that this historical context would be known to the average Roman citizen, as these symbolic media ensured the survival of this element of Augustus' character into the Roman cultural memory.<sup>658</sup> Nerva then forbade that gold and silver statues be set up to him in future.<sup>659</sup> This makes the messages of the Nerva restitution coins much more effective. I would argue that it is very plausible that an average citizen would know of the Augustan historical context as well as the melting down of Domitian's silver statues, and would be aware of Nerva's forbiddance of silver statues being set up for him. They could thus interpret the coin as not only portraying Nerva as following Augustus' model and condemning Domitian as being un-Augustan, but also proving it as a consequence of its existence.<sup>660</sup> This would thus engrain Domitian into the social memory as simply failing to follow the example of Augustus, and whatever message Domitian had intended to send through the production and proliferation of these gold and silver statues was replaced by the message that he was a wasteful and luxurious autocrat, by means of the spectacle of their destruction and recycling. Nerva's scheme of associating himself with Augustus, ostensibly by means of denigrating Domitian, would further remove Domitian from the canon of positive

<sup>652</sup> *RIC* II.2 Nerva, nos 126-141; Komnick (2001) p.100-5, 172-5; Hostein (2004) p.233-4.

<sup>653</sup> Komnick (2001) p.100-2. See Mattingly & Sydenham (1926) p.222 and Davies (2000b) p.98 for the suggestion that one coin (*RIC* II.2 Nerva, no.131; *BMC*RE III Nerva, no.153) celebrated Nerva as 'Augustus Restitutus', cf Mattingly (1936) p.12 who suggests that it is simply a restoration. See also a general 'Augustan' theme in Nerva coinage, as argued by Paillet & Sablayrolles (1994) p.19.

<sup>654</sup> Paillet & Sablayrolles (1994) p.19.

<sup>655</sup> Komnick (2001) p.174-5; Paillet & Sablayrolles (1994) p.19.

<sup>656</sup> Komnick (2001) p.172-5.

<sup>657</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 52; *RGDA* 24.2; Dio 53.22.1 adds that the statues were 'coined into money', making the comparison more direct.

<sup>658</sup> See Zanker (2010) p.86-89 and Pollini (2012) p.291-2. The tripods became a widely accepted symbol of piety during the Augustan period, and many of the monuments and objects which featured them would have survived to the reign of Nerva, such as their depiction on the doorway to the temple of Palatine Apollo.

<sup>659</sup> Dio 68.2.1

<sup>660</sup> Hannestad comments on the contrast between Augustus' and Domitian's approaches to statues of gold and silver – Hannestad (1988) p.140.

imperial *exempla* that he had wished to join. As discussed in the introduction, the strict dichotomy between good and bad emperors in the minds of contemporaries would have led this disassociation with the ultimate imperial *exemplum* to be interpreted to mean that Domitian was to join Caligula, Nero and Vitellius in being a negative *exemplum* of tyranny. The memory of the melting down of Domitian's statues, while it persisted, thus served to enhance the contrast between Nerva and Domitian in a very significant way.

#### Religious abuse and demonstrations of piety

Another one of the most significant and prevalent concerns with regard to the behaviour of Roman emperors is their interpretation and interaction with the divine, especially their own divinity. While the extent of the abuse varies, one of the typical characteristics for emperors who are considered tyrants by the Romans is that they are said to have abused or neglected traditional Roman religion in some way. In addition, these issues are often materially manifested in some form in the city of Rome. Most attempts at self-deification, or excessive promotion of a single god, would naturally have been accompanied by temples, or statues. The successor is then provided with an opportunity to contrast himself with his predecessor simply by treating Roman tradition with a degree of respect. The attempts by successive emperors to utilise this material legacy of perceived religious transgression to highlight their own piety, and the consequence this had for the tyrant's memory, are discussed below.

It seems that this abuse most often manifests itself in two ways – obsession over a single god or goddess, and attempts at self-divination, with the two often coming in tandem. Though the concept of a divine *comes*, or 'patron deity' is not inherently negative, and is practised by many emperors who were later deified, it is clear that this kind of singular obsession is negatively regarded in antiquity.<sup>661</sup> We can take Domitian, Caligula and Commodus as examples. Domitian's obsession with Minerva is well covered in scholarship.<sup>662</sup> In addition to the statements by Suetonius and Dio, we can statistically examine the coinage of Domitian in hoards, as Carradice has done, revealing that Minerva types were 'overwhelmingly dominant'.<sup>663</sup> The forum which he built, the *Forum Transitorium*, not only features a temple of Minerva, but also includes a frieze in the entablature depicting the myth of Arachne, which features Minerva heavily, and an image of Minerva in relief features in the surviving section of the high attic.<sup>664</sup> In the Chronography of 354, a *Templum Castorum et Minervae* is attributed to Domitian.<sup>665</sup> In the absence of any prior connection between the Dioscuri and Minerva, this

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<sup>661</sup> Hekster (2015) p.256.

<sup>662</sup> Scott, K. (1936) p.167; D'Ambra (1993) p.10-11; Alföldi (1999) p.45; Hekster (2015) p.252-5.

<sup>663</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 4.4; Dio 67.1.2; Burnett (1987) p.76; Carradice (1998) p.112.

<sup>664</sup> Richardson (1992) p.168; D'Ambra (1993).

<sup>665</sup> Chron. 146.14; Richardson (1992) p.255.

has led some to conclude that Domitian added a shrine to his divinity in the vicinity of the Temple of Castor and Pollux.<sup>666</sup> Finally, Varner makes note of a set of unusual ‘transgendered’ gem portraits of Domitian in the guise of Minerva.<sup>667</sup> For our purposes, the most significant aspect of these is that Domitian chose to align his appearance with that of his favoured divinity despite the fact that this divinity was female. This demonstrates the extreme degree to which he favoured Minerva. Commodus’ focus on Hercules will be discussed in chapter 5; it follows a similar pattern, with a prevalence of praise for Hercules in the beginning of his reign, followed by excessive imitation in the latter part.<sup>668</sup>

Caligula is portrayed as repeatedly putting himself on the same plane as the gods, aligning himself with them to portray himself as divine.<sup>669</sup> Dio alleges he went so far as to demand that temples be set up for him and sacrifices to be made to him as a god, saying that two of these temples were in Rome.<sup>670</sup> The one on the Capitoline is evidently a re-interpretation of the Capitoline *domus* which Suetonius mentions, and both connect its construction with an intent to live with the god.<sup>671</sup> Suetonius also relates how Caligula built a bridge over the temple of Augustus to connect the Capitoline with the *Domus Tiberiana* on the Palatine.<sup>672</sup> Considering the difficulty of constructing a bridge like this, and that it has left no visible traces, its existence is easy to doubt, though Richardson has sought to reconcile this issue by suggesting a wooden bridge or a series of walkways over existing buildings in-between the two sites.<sup>673</sup> If it did exist in some form, its prominence would surely act as a monument to Caligula’s divine aspirations until it was torn down, and would certainly make a mark on the social memory of the city even afterwards. The other temple, Dio says, was on the Palatine, and contained a statue of Caligula, which the emperor had placed there after he had failed to obtain the statue of Olympian Zeus which he intended to recarve to resemble himself.<sup>674</sup> I would argue that this is the same ‘Temple of Caligula’ that Suetonius refers to as containing a gold statue of the emperor dressed in his everyday clothes.<sup>675</sup> Again, there is no trace of this temple in the archaeological record, nor his house on the Capitoline, but their reported existence demonstrates what was considered to be within the character of Caligula with

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<sup>666</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 4.53.1-2; Rodriguez-Almeida (1985-6) p.117; Richardson (1992) p.255.

<sup>667</sup> Varner (2004) p.131-2; Alföldi (1999) p.45.

<sup>668</sup> Below, p.203.

<sup>669</sup> See Balsdon (1934) p.157-173; Winterling (2011) p.147-162 and Barrett (2014) p.195-202 for more detailed discussion as to the truth of these allegations, and the intended interpretation thereof.

<sup>670</sup> Dio 59.28.2, 59.4.4; Suet. *Calig.* 22.2-4; Winterling (2011) p.151-2.

<sup>671</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 22.4; Dio 59.28.2; Wiseman (1987) p.409.

<sup>672</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 22.4; Balsdon (1934) p.174.

<sup>673</sup> Richardson (1992) p.136; Wilkinson (2004) p.22.

<sup>674</sup> Dio 59.28.3-4; Balsdon (1934) p.163.

<sup>675</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 22.3.

regards to the material expression of his divine aspirations.<sup>676</sup> There is one case in which we can say with some confidence that the description provided by our sources is accurate with relative certainty, however. Suetonius describes how Caligula extended the palace 'right up to the forum' (*ad Forum usque*), and both he and Dio say that Caligula made the temple of Castor and Pollux in the forum the vestibule of his house.<sup>677</sup> Recent excavations have revealed the layout of this area (Fig.31), with the principal entrance, marked by three smaller rooms on the opposite end of the *atrium*, facing the temple of Castor and Pollux. Hurst thus suggests that our sources are correct, and that Caligula 'literally' made his entrance to the house through the temple.<sup>678</sup>

These offences are relatively simple, I would argue, for a successor emperor to contrast himself with. For the cases in which there was an excessive devotion to a single god or goddess, the successor need only demonstrate his respect for the rest of the Roman pantheon, with that god or goddess included. Nerva, for instance, does finish the *Forum Transitorium*, and dedicates the temple of Minerva therein. However, perhaps in order to demonstrate balance, he notably leaves Minerva out of his coin issues, where she had been so heavily represented before.<sup>679</sup> In addition, Elkins argues for a new interest in Diana on Nerva's part on the basis of a new *denarius* type and appearances on silver *cistophori* coins that were supplied to Asia Minor, saying that a focus on Diana acts as a retort to the excessive use of Minerva by his predecessor (Fig.32).<sup>680</sup> Severus takes an entirely different approach, adopting Hercules as one of his main tutelary gods, alongside *Liber Pater* despite the former's extensive use by Commodus.<sup>681</sup> However, the use of the legend '*dis auspicib(us)*' ('under divine auspices') on a type featuring the two tutelary gods serves to alleviate any concerns of a repeat of Commodus' obsession, explicitly stating that they are sponsored by the god, and that he does not consider the gods as equivalent to him.<sup>682</sup> In addition, as Rowan demonstrates, the types of Hercules and *Liber Pater* only total 3% of the total divine coinage types of Severus, demonstrating an awareness of the problems with Commodus' approach, and a desire to avoid replicating them.<sup>683</sup> Claudius, after restoring normality following Caligula's apparent divine aspirations, advertised his piety and commitment to Roman traditional values by showing

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<sup>676</sup> Barrett judges the scholarly consensus to be that there was one temple, on the Palatine, on the basis of an earlier shrine to Augustus that had been built there - see Barrett (2014) p.197.

<sup>677</sup> Suet. *Calig.* 22.2; Dio 59.28.5; Baldson (1934) p.174; Edwards (1993) p.169; Beard *et al.* (1998) p.209.

<sup>678</sup> Hurst (1986) p.470-8, esp. 475; Wiseman (1987) p.407; Richardson (1992) p.137; Hurst (1995) p.108; Barret (2014) p.237-8.

<sup>679</sup> Burnett (1987) p.76; Carradice (1998) p.112; Rowan (2012) p.14.

<sup>680</sup> Elkins (2017) p.65-9; *RIC* II.2 Nerva, no. 12; Brennan (2000) p.56-9.

<sup>681</sup> Rowan (2012) p.44.

<sup>682</sup> *RIC* IV.1 Septimius Severus, nos 25, 31, 661, 666, 669; Rowan (2012) p.41-5.

<sup>683</sup> Rowan (2012) p.44.



reverence to Livia, his grandmother, culminating in her deification.<sup>684</sup> The so-called *Ara Pietatis Augustae*, now known to be dedicated simply to *Pietas* was built in AD 43, a fulfilment of a vow made in AD 22 in response to Livia's ill health.<sup>685</sup> These acts of honouring Livia demonstrated Claudius' intentions only to give divine honours when they are deserved – the praise of Livia acts as contrast to his silent condemnation of his immediate predecessor. In addition, the connection to *pietas*, Levick argues, demonstrates Claudius' intent to choose an honourable successor, deliberately drawing attention to the mistake that was Gaius' succession from Tiberius.<sup>686</sup> Successors to tyrants could thus wield their own comparative piety against the memory of their predecessors, and, by making slight allusions to their predecessors' conduct, could enhance their own image by contrast.

In one case, however, this obsession over one god comes to define the entire character of the tyrant. The emperor who is referred to as 'Elagabalus' in modern times and his attempts to introduce the Syrian cult of Elagabal to Rome represent the most extreme manifestation of this singular obsession, and represents a unique opportunity for his successor, Alexander Severus, in a number of different ways. It is worth exploring this case study in more detail, with particular attention paid to the *Elagabalium* on the Capitoline, as the most clear example of this form of contrast in our period.

Elagabalus, a priest of the cult of Elagabal in Emesa, Syria, succeeded Caracalla in suspicious circumstances, claiming to be his illegitimate offspring. In our literary sources, his four-year reign was characterised by a variety of outrages, including effeminate debauchery, cultural disrespect and cruelty. Chief among these, however, are his religious abuses. All of our main three sources for his reign highlight his official elevation of Elagabal as the distinguishing aspect of his negative character.<sup>687</sup> The *Historia Augusta* draws attention to his immediate neglect of the affairs of the empire, portraying the emperor's immediate promotion of Elagabal above all other gods as the deed that shattered the initial hope of the Roman people following the turbulent reign of Macrinus.<sup>688</sup> Herodian, similarly, portrays the senate and the people as being cautiously optimistic about his reign, until they received the image of him in Syrian regalia, and Elagabalus asked the senators to place this in the *Curia* and sacrifice to Elagabal above all gods.<sup>689</sup> He also begins his account of Elagabalus' fall in the following fashion:

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<sup>684</sup> Dio 60.6.8, 5.2; Suet. *Claud.* 11.2.

<sup>685</sup> *CIL* VI 562 = *ILS* 202; Tac. *Ann.* 3.64; Richardson (1992) p.291; La Rocca (1993) p.87-9.

<sup>686</sup> Levick (2015) p.51-2, see also p.100-1.

<sup>687</sup> Millar (1964) p.169-70; Gariboldi (2013) p.515; Osgood (2016); Scott, A.G. (2018) p.106-9 - for the scholarly discussions on Elagabalus' religious conduct in the texts of Roman historians.

<sup>688</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 2-3.

<sup>689</sup> Herodian 5.5.6-7.

πάντων δὲ οὕτως τῶν πάλοι δοκούντων σεμνῶν ἐς ὕβριν καὶ παροινίαν  
ἐκβεβακχευμένων, οἳ τε ἄλλοι πάντες ἄνθρωποι καὶ μάλιστα οἱ στρατιῶται ἤχθοντο  
καὶ ἐδυσφόρουν<sup>690</sup>

‘When all that was once held in respect was reduced in this way to a state of  
dishonour and frenzied madness, everyone, and particularly the soldiers, began to  
grow bitterly angry.’

Though this directly follows on from Herodian’s account of Elagabalus’ favouritism, the use of the word *σεμνῶν* implies a distinct religious character to these offences. In this way, I believe Herodian is associating many of Elagabalus’ other wrongdoings with his religious conduct, as if everything else stemmed from it. Dio’s reaction, though less directly emotional, is perhaps the most intriguing. Seemingly taking on the role of an outside observer, he notes that the problem was not that Elagabalus attempted to introduce an unusual Eastern cult to the city.<sup>691</sup> Indeed, the Romans had accepted eastern cults in the past – Isis, Atagartis and Magna Mater, the latter being particularly relevant, as the cult was similarly aniconic, and had become part of the Roman tradition.<sup>692</sup> The *Historia Augusta* reports that Elagabalus adopted this cult, in fact, perhaps intending to draw attention to this parallel.<sup>693</sup> The issue that Dio highlights is that Elagabalus put the worship of the sun-god Elagabal before all other gods, including Jupiter.<sup>694</sup>

It is worth examining some of the relevant specifics of this campaign of religious reform, and our sources’ reaction to it. His entrance to the city, accompanied by the sacred stone of Elagabal, is reported by the *Historia Augusta* and Herodian, and is celebrated on contemporary coinage.<sup>695</sup> Elagabalus then began a series of offences that exacerbated the outrage.<sup>696</sup> He built two temples to Elagabal, one on the Palatine, and one in the suburbs of the city, and every summer a grand, and distinctly oriental, ceremony moved the stone from the centre to the outskirts of the city, further flaunting his cult before the citizens of Rome.<sup>697</sup> Our knowledge of this ceremony comes from Herodian, whose extensive account draws

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<sup>690</sup> Herodian 5.8.1, Trans. Whittaker, C.R. (1969).

<sup>691</sup> Dio 80.11.1.

<sup>692</sup> See Beard (2012), esp. p.340-351 – the integration of the cult was not without difficulty and friction with the traditional culture of Rome, but, since it never posed a threat to the rest of Roman tradition, it was tolerated; Gaifman (2012) p.114; Gariboldi (2013) p.517-19.

<sup>693</sup> Icks (2011) p.111; SHA *Heliogab.* 7.1.

<sup>694</sup> Dio 80.11.1; Beard *et al.* (1998) p.257; Ball (2000) p.413; Icks (2011) p.26, 35; Scott, A.G. (2018) p.126-7.

<sup>695</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 1.6; Herodian 5.5.7-8; Halsberghe (1972) p.62; Petsalis-Diomidis (2007) p.250-1; Gariboldi (2013) p.520. A series of coins depicts the stone, transported to Rome from Emesa, on a triumphal quadriga, with the legend ‘SANCT(O) DEO SOLI ELAGABAL’ ‘For the Holy Sun God Elagabal’, commemorating this transportation effort – RIC IV.2 Elagabalus, nos 143-4, 195-6A.

<sup>696</sup> Aur. Vic. *Epit. De Caes.* 23.3; Grant (1996) p.25; Christol (1997) p.50-51; Beard *et al.* (1998) p.255; Ball (2000) p.412; Hekster (2015) p.258.

<sup>697</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 1.6; Herodian 5.5.8, 5.6.6-10; Icks (2011) p.28.

attention to its sheer extravagance, and associates it with the deaths of several people.<sup>698</sup> In the Palatine temple, where the stone was housed for the majority of the year, we hear with incredulity from Dio and Herodian that he performed extravagant and morally outrageous rites while forcing the senators to witness them.<sup>699</sup> He married a Vestal Virgin, Aquilia Severa, which Herodian and Dio explicate as a direct violation of Roman religious law.<sup>700</sup> According to Dio and Herodian, he twice arranged divine marriages between Elagabal and important gods of the Roman religion, first to Minerva, then to the Carthaginian cult of Dea Caelestis/Urania.<sup>701</sup> There exists a contemporary inscription from Spain that puts the three gods in proximity, and they are the most common identifications for the two gods flanking Elagabal on the column capital found in the forum (Fig.33), lending further credence to this account.<sup>702</sup> Herodian aligns this offence with the marriage to the vestal, while Dio only mentions the latter marriage with, again, incredulity. The *Historia Augusta* relates that the emperor went so far as to attempt to bring all the cults of Rome into the Palatine temple of Elagabal, including those of the Jews, Samaritans and Christians, and Herodian mentions that the moving ceremony included statues 'of all the gods'.<sup>703</sup> His connection to his patron god was so great that the name by which we know him is the name of this god – he had intended to be called by the name Antoninus during his lifetime.<sup>704</sup>

As Icks has demonstrated, for many of these supposed outrages, there may have been logical justifications in the mind of the emperor beyond simple madness.<sup>705</sup> Nevertheless, the prevailing Roman reaction that is recorded is evidently one of sheer disgust and offence – any attempt he had made to get the population of the city to accept his god, ultimately, had failed.<sup>706</sup> Largely as a result of this failure, Elagabalus drew the ire of the Roman upper classes, and the soldiers.<sup>707</sup> There came a point where the soldiers only resisted as long as he continued to support Severus Alexander as co-ruler and successor, and when he made an

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<sup>698</sup> Herodian 5.6.9-10. Herodian describes Elagabalus distributing valuable goods from above, including gold and silver cups, livestock and cloth. This caused a stampede during which people were killed either by the soldiers or by trampling: ὡς τὴν ἐκείνου ἑορτὴν πολλοῖς φέρειν συμφορὰν ('and so his festival brought death to many people').

<sup>699</sup> Dio 80.11; Herodian 5.5.8; Icks (2011) p.30.

<sup>700</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 6.6; Dio 80.9.3-4; Herodian 5.6.2; Ando (2012) p.67; Gariboldi (2013) p.524. Though this may seem like a literary topos, her name appears on imperial coinage as 'Augusta', see Icks (2011) p.31-32.

<sup>701</sup> Dio 80.12.; Herodian 5.6.3-5; Scott, A.G. (2018) p.132; Petsalis-Diomidis (2007) p.251-2.

<sup>702</sup> Icks (2011) p.32-33; Frey (1989) p.50-1; SEG IV 164.

<sup>703</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 3.4-5; Herodian 5.6.8; Icks (2011) p.34-6.

<sup>704</sup> Rowan (2012) p.192.

<sup>705</sup> See Icks (2011)

<sup>706</sup> Mattingly (1950) p.cccxxviii-ccxxxix; Varner (2004) p.188; Icks (2011) p.37, 39.

<sup>707</sup> Manders (2005) p.123; Icks (2011) p.40-43, 88-89; Herodian 5.5.6. I agree with Icks in that, in Elagabalus' case, it is very understandable that the soldiers would disapprove of his favouritism and offensive behaviour, when it is considered that he had absolutely no military achievements to speak of, and so had done nothing to earn their respect.

attempt on Alexander's life, he was killed by the Praetorian guard and his corpse was subject to extensive public abuse.<sup>708</sup> Elagabalus' *damnatio memoriae* seems to have been particularly extensive, leaving only six examples of unaltered portraits surviving in the modern record, and, extraordinarily, the god Elagabal also suffered *damnatio*, to the extent that inscriptions dating from before Elagabalus' accession are mutilated.<sup>709</sup>

These attempts to reform religion in the city of Rome left a mark on the city, of course. The memory of the grand ceremonies, including the yearly ceremony which brought the stone from the Palatine temple to the suburban one, and the initial ceremony which welcomed the stone into the city, would have been embedded into the city's social memory. The coins and medallions which depicted the stone of Elagabal, the temples, or Elagabalus' Syrian attributes would remain, as would the inscriptions celebrating him as *sacerdos amplissimus*.<sup>710</sup> The most important and recognisable impact, however, would have been the two temples which he built to the god. The suburban temple is only known from Herodian, and was the centre of a ceremony every midsummer, in which the sacred stone was moved there from the Palatine temple.<sup>711</sup> Though there has been no archaeological confirmation of this, the fact that Herodian mentions chariot racing and theatrical shows in connection with this ceremony suggests that it was likely in the *ad spem veterem* area, near the Castrense Amphitheatre and the *Circus Varianus* (Fig.34).<sup>712</sup> On account of this uncertainty, its later history is not known. However, as the centre of such a lavish yearly ceremony, its importance in the role of embodying the memories of this ceremony should not be underestimated, regardless of its later fate.

The temple on the Palatine, known as the *Elagabalium*, is better attested, and is more significant besides. The temple has, by now, been securely identified with the remains of a sacred complex under the Vigna Barberini.<sup>713</sup> This sanctuary, the construction of which is dateable to the Severan period, is built on a terrace of Domitianic date, with its façade facing

<sup>708</sup> Herodian 5.8.1-9; Dio 80.20.1-2; SHA *Heliogab.* 15-18.

<sup>709</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 17.4-7; Dio 80.20.2, 80.21.2; Varner (2004) p.189-94; Rowan (2012) p.217-8; Ando (2012) p.68; Gaifman (2012) p.114; Gariboldi (2013) p.522, 525. For an example, see *CIL* VI 2269.

<sup>710</sup> *ILS* 473, 475, 1329, 2008, 9058; Christol (1997) p.51; Campbell (2008) p.21; Icks (2011) p.73, 84; Ando (2012) p.66; Gariboldi (2013) p.522. Rowan's quantitative analysis of these coin types in later hoards demonstrates how a large number of them would survive after his death – Rowan (2012) p.211-12. Rowan also suggests that due to their comparatively low representation, the coins of Elagabalus which depict the Elagabal stone may have been subject to melting down following the emperor's death. While this is certainly an intriguing possibility, it is very difficult to determine the true reason for their low representation, as we do not know their intended quantity in comparison to Elagabalus' other issues, and the shortness of his reign means that our sample size is relatively small – Rowan (2012) p.177.

<sup>711</sup> Herodian 5.5.6-10; Icks (2011) p.28; Rowan (2012) p.203-5.

<sup>712</sup> Herodian 5.5.6; Coarelli (1996a) p.10; Richardson (1992) p.142; Rowan (2012) p.199-201.

<sup>713</sup> See Coarelli (1987) p.433-6; Christol (1997) p.51; Broise & Thebert (1999); Rowan (2009) p.125; Rowan (2012) p.191; Icks (2011) p.27-8; De Arrizabalaga y Prado (2010) p.81-82; Gariboldi (2013) p.525.

towards the western slope of the Palatine, and is the site of the Church of St Sebastian (Fig.35). The temple itself is hexastyle, in the centre of a large square *temenos*, bordered by porticoes and a monumental *propylaeum*. This, as Coarelli points out, is totally analogous to the *Elagabalium* as depicted on a contemporary medallion (Fig.36).<sup>714</sup> There are also, curiously, numerous toponymical associations Elagabalus has with this location that further confirm this location as the *Elagabalium*. These include the medieval name for the region as the *regio palladii*. The *Historia Augusta* reports that Elagabalus transferred the Palladium here, and Hill proposes that the place name is perpetuating this memory.<sup>715</sup> There is also a church dedicated to St Sebastian, who is alleged to have confronted Diocletian ‘on the steps of Heliogabalus’.<sup>716</sup> The temple remains, and its depiction on this medallion, feature many particularly Syrian characteristics.<sup>717</sup> The multi-tiered altar, which supported the sacred stone, is depicted on another medallion; that of the *Elagabalium* seems to have been directly imitating the original two-tiered Emesene altar (Fig.37).<sup>718</sup> The large enclosed *temenos*, with a propylaeum, and the hexastyle *cella* are also distinctly oriental (Fig.38). The column capital, found in the forum, which depicts the stone of Elagabal flanked by two female deities (Fig.31), almost certainly originates from the Palatine temple. These are most likely Minerva and Urania, the two goddesses which the emperor had married to Elagabal, working one of Elagabalus’ most controversial religious acts into the fabric of the building.<sup>719</sup>

It is less clear, however, what had been in this spot on the Palatine before Elagabalus constructed the temple. The *Historia Augusta* alleges that it was built over a temple to ‘Orcus’.<sup>720</sup> I would agree with Richardson in concluding that the passage is corrupt, and the scholarly consensus is that it is impossible to securely resolve this with the existing evidence.<sup>721</sup> On the basis of the Commodan-era burn layer underneath, Rowan suggests that it is likely that palatial archives stood in this spot before the Severan period. She also theorises, on account of its size and thus difficulty of construction, that it was likely that it was begun by Septimius

<sup>714</sup> Coarelli (1996b) p.11;; Richardson (1992) p.142; Broise & Thebert (1999) p.746. First pointed out by Hill (1960b) p.210.

<sup>715</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 5.8; Hill (1960a) p.118.

<sup>716</sup> Hill (1960a) p.118; Richardson (1992) p.182.

<sup>717</sup> Broise & Thebert (1999) p.746-7; De Arrizabalaga y Prado (2010) p.80-81; Rowan (2012) p.194; Rambaldi (2013) p.176.

<sup>718</sup> Wroth (1964) p.238, nos. 238-10; Rowan (2012) p.194. For the original, see Donaldson (1859), no.19.

<sup>719</sup> Frey (1989) p.50-1; Icks (2011) p.33-4.

<sup>720</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 1.6.

<sup>721</sup> Richardson (1992) p.278; Rowan (2012) p.191. Coarelli tentatively suggests that it ‘*aedes orci*’ may be a corruption of ‘*Adonidis Horti*’, a corruption so extensive that it is difficult to lend it any credibility – Coarelli (1996b) p.10-11. The most we are able to realistically say is that *Orcus* may have been a corruption of *orti* or *Horti*, but even this is very uncertain.

Severus, and then completed by Elagabalus.<sup>722</sup> It has also been suggested by some that the area once hosted a cult to Jupiter Victor, on the basis of the *Notitia Regionum* mentioning a temple to Jupiter Victor in this area, but since the archaeology shows no evidence for this prior cult of Jupiter here, it is a difficult proposition to sustain.<sup>723</sup> Nevertheless, the implication that the structure was begun by Severus may represent an opportunity to reconcile these interpretations. The temple which Severus had originally intended may have been one to Jupiter Victor that was never completed, or even one to 'Orcus', or whatever the uncorrupted original may have been. This Palatine temple is then extremely important as a focal point for Elagabalus' attempts to introduce his god to Rome. It was at this temple that the stone to Elagabal was stored, and that Elagabalus performed the rituals, with senators as witnesses.<sup>724</sup> It was also to this temple that Elagabalus demanded the icons and rites of other cults be moved.<sup>725</sup> The temple's proximity to the Palatine palace would have contributed to Elagabalus' close association with the god, and the persistence of the Elagabalian toponyms for the area long after the emperor's (and the god's) *damnatio memoriae*, demonstrates the building's strong connections to the memory of this association.<sup>726</sup>

This structure would then be singularly important for the immediate successor of Elagabalus, Severus Alexander, to capitalise upon. As Rowan states while commenting upon how this is reflected in the *Historia Augusta's* account of his reign, the combined evidence suggests that 'Alexander's rule was to a certain extent defined by an explicit contrast with his predecessor', and Rowan's work contributes immensely to the understanding of this relationship's religious aspects.<sup>727</sup> This contrast manifests itself in many different ways, however, some of which will be covered in the following chapter. For now we will focus on the religious 'revival' Alexander pursued. One of his first acts, according to Herodian and the *Historia Augusta*, was to restore the statues of the gods to their rightful places.<sup>728</sup> The *Historia Augusta* even quotes the initial oration of the senate as explicitly praising this action and, while the *Vita* of Severus Alexander is certainly far from a reliable source of information, it

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<sup>722</sup> Rowan (2012) p.196. While Broise & Thebert (1999) are keen to emphasise the fact that the temple seems to have been constructed quickly, it is unlikely that such a massive undertaking would be planned, constructed and dedicated within four years. It is likely that Elagabalus simply accelerated the completion of the structure upon his accession.

<sup>723</sup> Bigot (1911) p.80-2; Hill (1960b) p.210. C.f. Richardson (1992) p.227; Coarelli (1987) p.436; Coarelli (1996c) p.160-1; Rowan (2009) p.128. There is also a suggestion that it bears some resemblance to a depiction of the temple of Jupiter Victor on a coin of Trajan, but as Icks notes, the difference is still too great to argue on this basis that they are the same building – Icks (2011) p.28; *RIC* II.2 Trajan, no.577; *BMCRE* III, Trajan, no.863.

<sup>724</sup> Dio 80.11; Herodian 5.5.8-9.

<sup>725</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 3.4, 6.6-9.

<sup>726</sup> Rowan (2012) p.196.

<sup>727</sup> Jardé (1925) p.53-4; Manders (2005) p.137; Campbell (2008) p.22; Ando (2012) p.69-71; Rowan (2012) p.220.

<sup>728</sup> Herodian 6.1.3; SHA *Alex. Sev.* 6.2-3.

seems likely that Alexander would have capitalised on his action by treating it like a religious ceremony. Thus, he would establish his intentions immediately to the citizens to undo the damage of his predecessor, and anything following would be read with this intent in mind.

Above all, as reflected in quantitative analysis of silver coins found in hoards, Alexander seems to have focussed on Mars and Jupiter on his coinage (Fig.39).<sup>729</sup> As both Rowan and Coarelli agree, Jupiter, representing not only the true head of the Roman pantheon but also the favoured patron god for much of the Severan era, was surely chosen as a reassurance to the people that the new emperor wished to restore Roman religion to its original state, before Elagabalus had interfered.<sup>730</sup> That Jupiter is explicitly mentioned in Dio's account of Elagabalus adds further credence to this interpretation.<sup>731</sup> In Elagabalus' time, the Emesene stone itself featured an eagle, a symbol that had long been associated with Elagabal.<sup>732</sup> Despite this, the eagle was also a traditional symbol of Jupiter, and I agree with Rowan in saying that this may have led people in Rome to interpret this as an attempt to subsume Jupiter's role, and a renewed focus on the god would be interpreted as a reassertion of Jupiter's supremacy.<sup>733</sup> More coin legends featuring Jupiter highlight Alexander's use of the god to contrast himself with Elagabalus. The use of the title *sacerdos urbis* on coins celebrating his piety in general would directly contrast with Elagabalus' *sacerdos amplissimus*.<sup>734</sup> Curiously, Jupiter is also depicted a number of times with the 'conservator' epithet on the coinage of Alexander Severus (Fig.40).<sup>735</sup> This ostensibly references the failed attempts that Elagabalus made on the life of Alexander while the former was still emperor, and thus attempts to legitimise that Severus was in the god's favour while Elagabalus was not. Rowan points out that it also, however, acts as a rebuttal of the same epithet being given to the god Elagabal on Elagabalus' coinage, again representing Jupiter's resurgence to his rightful position.<sup>736</sup>

The most significant expression of this focus on Jupiter, and its contrast with his predecessor's promotion of Elagabal, is, of course, the conversion of the *Elagabalium* into the temple to Jupiter Ultor. The archaeological record shows a second phase of building on the site

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<sup>729</sup> Manders (2005) p.127; Rowan (2009) p.135-42; Rowan (2012) p.223. For full statistical breakdown, see Carson (2005) p.43-5.

<sup>730</sup> Coarelli (1987) p.439; Rowan (2012) p.221.

<sup>731</sup> Coarelli (1987) p.439; Dio.80.11.1.

<sup>732</sup> Wroth (1964) p.237, nos 1-7; Millar (1993) p.301.

<sup>733</sup> Beard *et al.* (1998) p.256; Rowan (2012) p.207.

<sup>734</sup> Rowan (2012) p.222.

<sup>735</sup> *RIC* IV.2 Severus Alexander, nos 140-1. These coins are dated to 222 AD, immediately after Severus Alexander's accession, when the memory of the attempts against his life would have been strongest. It should be noted that Jupiter Custos/Conservator had been used by Emperors to commemorate deliverance from conspiracies or other dangers at least since the time of Nero, and so its use here is not a direct reference to its use by Domitian – Hill (1960a) p.120-121.

<sup>736</sup> *RIC* IV.2 Severus Alexander, nos 61-2, 64-5; Rowan (2012) p.228; Manders (2005) p.126.

shortly after the first, and the depictions of the two structures on medallions of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander are similar enough that it was likely a deliberate choice by the latter to emphasise the contrast between them – the only difference, as Coarelli points out, is that the stone of Elagabal has been replaced by a seated image of Jupiter (Fig.41).<sup>737</sup> The statement in the *Historia Augusta* that some people in his/their time refer to the temple by the name of Jupiter, and some by the name of *Sol* lends further credence to this theory when one remembers that Elagabal was a sun-god.<sup>738</sup> There is little doubt among modern scholarship, therefore, that the temple of Jupiter Ultor is a conversion of the Palatine *Elagabalium*.<sup>739</sup> The choice of the epithet ‘Ultor’ for Jupiter, though not an innovation by Alexander, was still relatively unusual.<sup>740</sup> Thus, the use of Jupiter ‘the avenger’ makes this usurpation much more direct, as it is undoubtedly a reference to Alexander’s correction of Elagabalus’ infractions, especially when it is considered how unusual this epithet is for Jupiter.<sup>741</sup> This direct assertion of a successor’s intention to undo the work of the condemned predecessor is quite exceptional, and demonstrates how well Alexander recognised the value of exploiting his predecessor’s denigration for legitimising his own position. This would be further intensified by the memory of the earlier shrine, whether that was to Jupiter Victor, ‘Orcus’, or whomever the Severans had supposedly intended the sanctuary to be dedicated to. This epithet would also be interpreted as a direct reference to Augustus’ use of Mars Ultor, thereby aligning himself with Augustus, and asserting that Alexander’s defeat of Elagabalus was as much of a re-birth of Rome as Augustus’ victory in the civil war.<sup>742</sup> The aforementioned focus on Mars in coinage would capitalise upon this connection, and Mars himself would have represented Alexander’s own overthrow of Elagabalus, and loyalty of the soldiers to the new emperor.<sup>743</sup> This is in contrast to Elagabal who would have come to represent Elagabalus’ disdain for the views of the soldiers, for the demands of the people, and his arrogance in attempting to assassinate his cousin.

Several of Alexander’s other works in the city served to deepen this religious contrast between him and his predecessor. We are aware of a shrine of Jupiter Redux that was

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<sup>737</sup> Coarelli (1987) p.434; Richardson (1992) p.227; Rowan (2009) p.127; Rowan (2012) p.223.

<sup>738</sup> SHA *Heliogab.* 17.8; Bigot (1911) p.80-82; Hill (1960b) p.210.

<sup>739</sup> Bigot (1911) p.80-82; Hill (1960b) p.210; Coarelli (1987) p.436-7; Coarelli (1996c) p.161; Rowan (2012) p.223-4. Richardson is more hesitant, on the basis that a ‘duplicate’ of the Capitoline temple would not have been built in such close proximity - Richardson (1992) p.227. However, the design of this temple is so distinct from that of Jupiter Capitolinus as to question the very basis of this argument, and, as has been mentioned, there existed at least one other temple to Jupiter, that of Jupiter Custos, on the Capitoline hill itself.

<sup>740</sup> Hill (1960a) p.117.

<sup>741</sup> Hill (1960a) p.119; Rowan (2009) p.134-5; Rowan (2012) p.223; Rambaldi (2013) p.176.

<sup>742</sup> Rowan (2012) p.233-5.

<sup>743</sup> Rowan (2012) p.234.



dedicated in honour of Alexander and his mother Mammaea in the *Castra Peregrina*, a camp on the Caelian hill intended for use by soldiers of provincial armies.<sup>744</sup> The epithet *Redux* ('the returner') obviously has similar connotations to that of 'Ultor'. It implies that Jupiter has returned Rome to its rightful state after the usurpation of its traditional religion by Elagabal.<sup>745</sup> The fact that the *centurio frumentarius* chose to honour Alexander and Mammaea in this way demonstrates the importance of Jupiter to Alexander's image and the epithet demonstrates, to some extent, that his attempt to portray himself as Jupiter's champion had succeeded. In two separate occasions, Severus Alexander chose to celebrate other, more well-established, eastern cults in the city of Rome. Firstly, the temple of Dea Suria is attributed by the Chronography of 354 to Severus Alexander.<sup>746</sup> Though this does not guarantee that the temple was built at this time and, indeed, it may belong to a far earlier period, the fact that the Chronography attributes it to Alexander suggests that there is some connection between him and the temple – a restoration, at the very least.<sup>747</sup> The *Historia Augusta* recalls that he also restored the temple of Isis on the *Campus Martius*.<sup>748</sup> Again, though the *Historia Augusta* is not reliable in itself for this period, the attribution of this restoration to Alexander implies the existence of some connection between the emperor and the temple of the Egyptian goddess. If we then conclude that Alexander chose to celebrate these two eastern cults in this way, it provides an interesting alternative to his veneration of Jupiter. Promotion of these cults would be drawing attention to 'better', more palatable, examples of Roman appropriation of oriental practice, and thus would be drawing deliberate contrast with Elagabalus' extraordinary fanaticism. A connection to the temple of Isis could be particularly important. Dio mentions that the statue of Isis on the pediment of the temple turned its face towards the temple's interior, as a portent of Elagabalus' downfall.<sup>749</sup> Though such omens are normally difficult to put any stock in due to their likely basis in rumour, since Dio was writing in the reign of Severus Alexander, it demonstrates that this particular omen was still in the social memory of the city. It is thus possible that Alexander's renovation of the temple would have been interpreted as a commemoration of Isis' purported rejection of Elagabalus.

Elagabal's short existence in the city of Rome can be read simply as a more extreme example of the more widespread tendency for tyrants to be characterised by their over-attachment to their patron deities. However, the unusual nature of the deity in question, the

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<sup>744</sup> *CIL* VI 428 = *ILS* 2219; Richardson (1992) p.78; Caronna (1993) p.249.

<sup>745</sup> Coarelli points out that this restoration of older sites reinforces his contrast with his predecessor's religious conduct – Coarelli (1987) p.439.

<sup>746</sup> *Chron.* 147.20; Gysens (1995) p.8; Richardson (1992) p.107.

<sup>747</sup> Coarelli (1987) p.433-4.

<sup>748</sup> *SHA Alex. Sev.* 26.8; Coarelli (1987) p.433.

<sup>749</sup> Dio 80.10.1.

lengths to which Elagabalus went to promote this god above all others, the emperor's close alignment to the god, and the fact that the deity itself was condemned along with the emperor presented Alexander with a unique opportunity. His rededication of the *Elagabalium* as Jupiter Ultor in the context of his wider promotion of Jupiter clearly demonstrates his recognition of the importance of contrast, especially direct spatial juxtaposition, for justifying his legitimacy.

### Visual Contrast

While all of the instances of contrast discussed thus far in this chapter explicitly draw attention to the ideological differences between the condemned tyrant and his successor, this is not necessarily the only way to contrast two emperors. As the character of the tyrant is established by other media, whether explicitly in text or by implication in material, it becomes no longer necessary to prove the tyrant's evils, or the successor's virtues. At this point, it is sufficiently prestigious for the successor to simply demonstrate that he was in no way similar to his condemned predecessor. In material, this can be achieved through visual contrast – a difference in appearance which is not tied in either case to any individual trait or ideological motive in isolation. This can be achieved in a difference of visual style, or the adoption of a different type of portraiture. In addition, a similar effect could also be achieved simply by emphasising and taking advantage of circumstances within Rome close to the deposition of the tyrant.

In three of our case studies – Nero, Vitellius, and Commodus – there were large fires in the later years of the tyrant's reign, to the extent that the devastation caused by these fires was still visible during the reign of their immediate successors.<sup>750</sup> While this devastation was not, in truth, part of the tyrant's material legacy, there would certainly have been a cognitive association between it and the reign of the tyrant. For instance, Herodian ends his account of the fire of 192 by stating how some interpreted it as the will of the gods, and juxtaposes the end of the fire with the Roman people turning against Commodus.<sup>751</sup> This association could then be exploited by a successor as he restores the damaged buildings and monuments, for as he establishes himself as a magnanimous benefactor through these restorations, he implies that his predecessor failed to fulfil his duties as emperor due to selfishness. One can see this in many separate instances: Vespasian's restoration of the Capitoline and surrounds, Domitian's

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<sup>750</sup> For details of the fire of Nero: Dio 62.16-18; Tac. *Ann.* 15.38-42; Orosius 7.7.4-7; Suet. *Nero* 38; Griffin (1984) p.129-32; Champlin (2003) p.178-9; Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.315. For that of Vitellius: Tac. *Hist.* 3.71-4; Dio 64.17; Orosius 7.8.7; Suet. *Vitell.* 15.3; Jer. *a. Abr.* 2085; Plut. *Publ.* 15.2; Wellesley (1975) p.193-4; Richardson (1992) p.223; Morgan (2006) p.246-7. While the fire that destroyed the capitol was certainly singularly significant despite its small extent, the damage to the city caused by the civil war could also become associated with him in a similar way: Tac. *Hist.* 3.84.1. For that of Commodus: Jer. *a. Abr.* 2207; Orosius 7.16.3; Herodian 1.14.4; Dio 73.24.1-3; Daguet-Gagey (1997) p.59-63; Lusnia (2014) p.17-24.

<sup>751</sup> Herodian 1.14.6-7; Daguet-Gagey (1997) p.59. See also Pliny *NH.* 36.110, below.

restorations following the fire of Titus, as well as the well-known extensive Severan restoration programme.<sup>752</sup> This effect would be even stronger in the cases where the tyrant's building programme is portrayed as selfish, such as with Nero's *Domus Aurea* and Domitian's Palatine palace, as it would seem as if the emperor was prioritising his own luxury over maintaining the splendour of the city and the comfort of its citizens.<sup>753</sup>

This contrast could also lend credence to accusations that the tyrant deliberately caused the fire in question, and if this rumour took hold, then this knowledge would also intensify any mental associations between the tyrant and the damaged city. The prevalence of such a rumour in our sources for Nero's reign has already been mentioned above in the context of the *Domus Aurea*. While modern scholarship agrees with Tacitus that it is unlikely that Nero started the fire, Suetonius is confident enough to state that he did as a fact, with no qualifying statement, unlike in other cases where the facts might be disputed.<sup>754</sup> Dio and Orosius are similarly confident, suggesting that by the third century there was no disputing this version of events.<sup>755</sup> The fire that ravaged the Capitoline hill during the reign of Vitellius was, in fact, caused by his soldiers' siege of the Capitoline. Therefore, even though it is not entirely clear whose soldiers were directly responsible for the fire, it was much easier for Vespasian to lay blame upon Vitellius directly for besieging the Capitol.<sup>756</sup> Many of our sources, when discussing these fires, also allude to the 390 BC Gallic sack of Rome when attempting to describe the aftermath.<sup>757</sup> Depicting the fires as a sack of Rome by a barbarian power suggests an association between the tyrant and barbarians. In the cases where these tyrants are accused of despoiling Rome for its wealth as part of their negative characterisation, and they

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<sup>752</sup> On the restoration of the Capitoline temple: Suet. *Vesp.* 8.5; Dio 56.10.2; Jer. *a. Abr.* 2089; Tac. *Hist.* 4.53.1; Plut. *Publ.* 15.2; Richardson (1992) p.223; Closs (2016) p.116; Levick (2017) p.135. Vespasian is known to have restored both the Temple of *Honos et Virtus*, and the theatre of Marcellus, likely damaged during the fires of Nero and the Capitoline respectively – Aur. Vict. *Epit. de Caes.* 9.8; Dio 56.10.1; Suet. *Vesp.* 19.1; Pliny *NH.* 35.120; Richardson (1992) p.190, 382; Darwall Smith (1996) p.68-9; Palombi (1996) p.32; Rossetto (1999) p.32; Flower (2006) p.228; Levick (2017) p.139; Chomse (2018) p.388. Domitian also restored a great many buildings damaged by fire – Suet. *Dom.* 5.1; Jones, B. (1992) p.79-81. The Severans will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter; for how the fire of Commodus enabled this programme, see: Grant (1996) p.64; Gorrie (2007) p.6 n.22; Rowan (2012) p.67; Koehler (2013) p.129; Lusnia (2014) p.29-30.

<sup>753</sup> The *Domus Aurea's* reputation has been discussed in detail, for the Palatine palace: Pliny *Pan.* I.47.4-49.1.

<sup>754</sup> Suet. *Nero* 38.1.

<sup>755</sup> Orosius 7.7.4-7; Dio 62.16.1-2. See also Stat. *Silv.* 2.6.60-1.

<sup>756</sup> Eutropius *Brev.* 7.18; Suet. *Vitell.* 15.2; Tac. *Hist.* 3.71; Wellesley (1975) p.193-4; Morgan (2006) p.246.

<sup>757</sup> For Nero: Dio 62.17.3, 62.18.2. Suetonius (Suet. *Nero* 38.2) mentions the Gallic wars when discussing what had been destroyed but does not make a direct comparison. Tacitus calls attention to the fact that contemporaries noted that the dates on which the two fires began were both the 19<sup>th</sup> July – Tac. *Ann.* 15.41. He also makes a direct comparison to the fire later – Tac. *Ann.* 15.43; Edwards (2011) p.654. For Vitellius: Tac. *Hist.* 3.72.1; Statius *Silv.* 5.3.195-202.

are condemned by conflation with barbarians, this comparison can help to provide justification for this.<sup>758</sup>

Yet, the most significant impact that this contrast would have, I believe, is a metaphorical one. If Rome, at the end of the reign of the tyrant, is left in ruins, such a state can easily be exploited by a successor to imply that it is representative of the moral, financial, or political ruin that the condemned emperor has wrought upon the Roman state. As Chomse states, one could see the ‘metaphorical ruin of Rome’ in the charred remains of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the unfinished remains of the *Domus Aurea*.<sup>759</sup> Pliny the Elder, in fact, states in his *Natural History* when discussing the large houses of the aristocracy and the emperors that ‘Fires, we may be sure, are punishments inflicted upon us for our extravagance’ (*profecto incendia puniunt luxum*).<sup>760</sup> If the successor immediately capitalises upon this by focusing on a programme of restoration, then this restoration would then act as a metaphor for him cleanly healing the city of the damage that the tyrant has done.<sup>761</sup> This makes the restoration of damage due to fire an embodiment of the contrast between the two emperors as a whole. Vespasian is especially keen to take advantage of this effect, it seems. Dio states that Vespasian ‘immediately’ began to construct the temple on the Capitoline, which was burned down during the year of the four emperors, and that he himself brought out the first load of soil, to inspire the citizens to aid him.<sup>762</sup> The haste of his actions and his personal involvement demonstrate his awareness of the symbolic importance of the temple’s reconstruction.<sup>763</sup> The citizens who assisted in the temple’s construction would also be, themselves, acting to support Vespasian’s restoration efforts, and condemn the damage done by the troops of Vitellius.<sup>764</sup> The restoration efforts of the Severans were famously extensive, owing to the severity of the fire of Commodus, and that it occurred in the last year of

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<sup>758</sup> For Vitellius: Tac. *Hist.* 73.1. Both Suetonius and Tacitus mention, with disdain, that Vitellius assumed the office of *Pontifex Maximus* on the 18<sup>th</sup> July, the anniversary of the battle which led to the 390 BC sack of Rome – Suet. *Vitell.* 11.2; Tac. *Hist.* 91.1; Wellesley (1975) p.193. For Nero: Suetonius claims he sang ‘The sack of Illium’, likely an original composition by Nero during the fire, implying he viewed it as a sack of the city. Suetonius then states that Nero was attempting to ‘take all the spoil and booty possible’ (*quantum posset praedae et manubiarum invaderet*) from the fire, with the words *praeda*, *manubiae* and *invadere* having a very military connotation. There is also the aforementioned allusions to the speech by the proposals made to move to Veii in the wake of the sack – Suet. *Nero* 38.2-3; above, p.128. Dio goes further, directly stating that the ‘sack of Troy’ should be interpreted as ‘the sack of Rome’, that the soldiers sought to plunder the city, and that it directly recalled memories of the 390BC sack as a result – Dio 62.17.1-18.2.

<sup>759</sup> Chomse (2018) p.389.

<sup>760</sup> Pliny *NH.* 36.110; Packer (2003) p.167. For more of the ruins of Rome as a metaphor for the moral ruin of the Roman state and society, see Edwards (2011) p.656-51

<sup>761</sup> See Aur. Vict. *Epit. de Caes.* 9.16. Edwards points out how Vespasian was able to take advantage of this after Nero’s reign – Edwards (2011) p.655-6.

<sup>762</sup> Dio 65.10.2; Suet. *Vesp.* 8.5.

<sup>763</sup> Sailor (2008) p.210-18.

<sup>764</sup> See also Tac. *Hist.* 4.53.1 for the involvement of citizens ‘of all orders’. Darwall-Smith (1996) p.44-45.

Commodus' reign, meaning that he had little opportunity, in truth, to restore much of the damage before his death. Finally, Trajan was able to take advantage of a fire in the *Circus Maximus* in Domitian's time in a unique way, as we hear from Suetonius that he re-used stones from Domitian's new *naumachia* to repair the damage.<sup>765</sup> This acts as a criticism of Domitian's choices, to build new extravagant spectacle buildings, over repairing the venerable republican *Circus*.

The altars known as the *Arae incendii Neronis* clearly demonstrate that Domitian recognised the importance of this effect (Fig.42). The *Arae*, of which there are several remaining examples, each bore a copy of a remarkable inscription (Index 11), recording that it was built by Domitian in fulfilment of a vow originally promised by Nero following the fire of AD 64.<sup>766</sup> This text was recently the subject of a detailed analysis by Closs, whose observations reveal its significant implications for using restorations after fire to contrast an emperor with his predecessor. As she points out, the way this fulfilment of the vow is worded is very intriguing. The text avoids directly crediting Nero for originating the vow, instead, in her words, 'couching his name in an adjectival form that encompasses the entire period in question' and while there is no direct reference to Nero's perpetration of the fire, it might have easily been inferred when the wide prevalence of the rumour is considered.<sup>767</sup> By confining the disaster to 'the time of Nero' (*Neronianis temporibus*), Domitian reaffirms the association between Nero himself and the physical devastation of the city, as well as his own dynasty and their renewal efforts.<sup>768</sup> Adding that the vow 'was long neglected and not fulfilled' (*diu erat neglectum nec redditum*) both implicitly accuses Nero of neglect in restoring the city following the fire, but also implies that his religious response was insufficient.<sup>769</sup> However, as Closs observes, the text itself suggests that the vow was likely made in its aftermath, meaning that it was not necessarily due to be fulfilled by the end of Nero's reign and Domitian is thus utilising Nero's own religious dutifulness to depict him as a 'religious failure'.<sup>770</sup> The language of the prohibition to re-use the land surrounding the *Arae* evokes the eternal, in addition, as the annual festival serves to preserve the memory of the fire, and Nero's failure, beyond the living

<sup>765</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 5.1; Pliny *Pan.* I.51.3-5; Dio 68.7.2; Richardson (1992) p.85.

<sup>766</sup> *CIL* VI 826, 30837 = *ILS* 3914 (Index 11); Closs (2016) p.102-3; Richardson (1992) p.21. The notion that these delimited the boundaries of the fire damage has been soundly disproven, as several are known from outside of the fire's known extent – Rodriguez-Almeida (1993) p.76. The inscription survives only in Renaissance copies – the original stones are lost – Closs (2016) p.103-5.

<sup>767</sup> Closs (2016) p.110; Flaig (2015) p.285-6.

<sup>768</sup> Closs (2016) p.110, 103; D'Ambra (1993) p.45.

<sup>769</sup> For Nero's religious response to the fire, and the criticism of said response, see Tac. *Ann.* 16.44.1; Shannon (2012) p.756-62.

<sup>770</sup> Closs (2016) p.111-2. The use of *quando* followed by the perfect *arsit* makes this more likely than Nero making the vow during the destruction of the city.

memory of those who witnessed it.<sup>771</sup> The proximity of one of these altars to an arch of Titus, built on the site of an older arch which had been destroyed by Nero in the centre of the *Circus Maximus*, utilises similarly eternal-sounding language, and serves to complement the contrast between destruction and renewal that is emphasised on the text of the *Arae*.<sup>772</sup> When the inevitable restoration of the city following a severe fire during the reign of a tyrant is viewed as part of the wider effort to contrast the successor with the condemned predecessor, it adopts an especial significance. The fire acts as a representation of the damage a tyrant has done, and the restoration as the efforts of a successor to undo it.

One of the most significant and prevalent occurrences of visual contrast following the deposition of a tyrant is within recarved portraiture. As we have discussed, many of the marble portrait statues of tyrants were completely destroyed, mutilated, or removed from display forever during their *damnatio memoriae*. However, it is true that many statues were later re-used in some way. Most bronze statues were melted down, and their material re-used, for instance. Marble images however would have been very difficult to recycle in this way, and so marble portrait statues that were not completely destroyed were often reworked into images of others, most often those of a tyrant's successors.<sup>773</sup> This could be immediate, as in the case of many of Domitian's images, to the extent that a large majority (82%) of extant portraits of Nerva are reworked from images of Domitian.<sup>774</sup> However, these withdrawn portraits occasionally have been observed to languish in warehouses for much longer periods of time, being reworked centuries later, such as an image of Domitian that was used as the base for an image of a Constantinian emperor in the fourth century (Fig.43).<sup>775</sup> On occasion, they were also reworked in the short term into images of emperors who had preceded the condemned. Taking Domitian as an example again, several of his portraits were reworked into images of Titus and Augustus.<sup>776</sup> This intriguing practice, of reworking statues of condemned tyrants, has rightfully received a lot of attention during the recent boom in the study of *damnatio memoriae*.<sup>777</sup> It is generally agreed that one of the major reasons for doing this was practical, in that it is cheaper in terms of materials and labour to recarve than to create a portrait

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<sup>771</sup> Closs (2016) p.118-20.

<sup>772</sup> *CIL* VI 944; Rossetto (1993) p.108; Den Hollander (2014) p.196; Closs (2016) p.113.

<sup>773</sup> It has also been pointed out by Højte that statue bases could also be re-used, their inscriptions recarved and the statues recarved or replaced, amplifying any subsequent effects – Højte (2005) p.57-9.

<sup>774</sup> Kleiner (1992) p.200; Kinney (1997) p.135; Varner (2004) p.115.

<sup>775</sup> Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, inv 89.6; Varner (2000a) p.172-175; Varner (2004) p.124-12.

<sup>776</sup> Varner (2004) p.123, 125

<sup>777</sup> Pollini comments on this in his review of Varner (2004) – Pollini (2006) p.590.

anew.<sup>778</sup> However, as established by Varner and then supported in an important reassessment by Galinsky, it certainly has significant and deliberate ideological consequences.<sup>779</sup>

When a portrait is recarved, it retains, to varying degrees, some of the features of the previous portrait – this, in fact, is how recarved portraits can be identified with confidence. These features therefore exist in direct juxtaposition with the features of the new emperor, the portrait styles of the two being very different as they wished to represent different ideological foci with them. This, according to Varner and others, represents a deliberate attempt to draw contrast between the two emperors.<sup>780</sup> As Galinsky states, there was no intention to eradicate the memory of the condemned through recarving, ‘rather to keep it alive by making it compare unfavourably, or, if we will, damningly, with a better model’.<sup>781</sup> Galinsky uses the example of a portrait of Nerva (Fig.44) that has been reworked from one of Domitian, which demonstrates both the idealising *luxuria* of the still-visible Domitianic portrait features, and Nerva’s ‘verist’ features.<sup>782</sup> Varner concedes that the groups likely to recognise the portraits as being recarved would need to be ‘sophisticated’ viewers, and I would agree.<sup>783</sup> It is also unlikely that a layman would be able to distinguish the ideological meanings of the remnants of the original portrait, and how it differs from those of the new image. However, it is considerably more believable that an ordinary citizen, viewing a statue like this, may be subconsciously reminded of the condemned tyrant by these remnants. This could then call to mind memories of the tyrant in question and invite comparison between him and the new emperor. Due to the, at times, overwhelming prevalence of these types of portraits, this would serve to extend the reach of material contrast immensely, with each portrait acting as a visual representation of the differences between the two emperors in general. The survival of the tyrant’s portrait features in the recarved portraits is even more significant when it is considered that any original portraits of the tyrants would have been removed or destroyed following their *damnatio*, meaning that these represent the only surviving trace of their intended personal image outside of the memories of the citizens.<sup>784</sup> It should also be mentioned that these reworked images did not only serve to denigrate the predecessor through contrast, but also represented a concession to the supporters of the condemned, as the new emperor appears to be adopting some of the tyrant’s traits – an aspect of

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<sup>778</sup> Varner (2004) p.4.

<sup>779</sup> Varner (2000a); Elsner (2003) p.216; Varner (2004); Galinsky (2008).

<sup>780</sup> Carey (2006) p.169; Varner (2004) p.9-10; Galinsky (2008) p.1, 5, 15-16.

<sup>781</sup> Galinsky (2008) p.5; Pollini (2006) p.590.

<sup>782</sup> See Varner (2000a) p.154-175; Varner (2004) p.111-135; Flower (2006) p.259-61; Varner (2008) p.143-145. See the similar relationship between the portraits of Nero and Vespasian - Welch (2002) p.133-4.

<sup>783</sup> Varner (2004) p.9.

<sup>784</sup> And certain private contexts, see above, p.68.

appropriation which will be discussed in the following chapter. A reworked portrait might not, in isolation, present a direct and recognisable narrative of contrast between a tyrant and his successor. In the context of the wider display of contrast throughout the city, however, these objects would act as omnipresent reminders of the supposedly extreme differences between the two men.

## Conclusion

Deliberate contrast, targeted at visual reminders of aspects of a condemned emperor's negative character is an almost inevitable consequence of *damnatio memoriae*, as the successor seeks to legitimise his position. Perhaps the most important message for the successor emperor to send was a reassurance that he respected the limits on his authority, and that he would not selfishly abuse that which he was given. The case study of the *Domus Aurea* and the Flavian monuments which replaced and subsumed it demonstrates this clearly. The poem by Martial serves to confirm the interpretation of the Flavians' building work in the area as a deliberate and systematic campaign to portray themselves as the opposite of Nero, as where he had stolen land for his own luxury, they had returned it magnificently embellished. If it is true that the *Domus* was truly intended to be public initially, the fact that all of our post-Flavian sources condemn it for its private nature implies that this campaign succeeded. Thus, the character of Nero was forever altered by this conscious act of contrast. In the case of the *Equus Domitiani*, successors' later monuments exploited the colossal statue's autocratic connotations to enhance their own messages of *libertas*. The use of the site much later by Severus provides a glimpse into how this effect can be used by emperors much later than the immediate successor, rejuvenating the negative memories of Domitian's monument. Meanwhile, the images that the coins of a successor emperor's early issues presented would have been directly compared with those of his predecessor. The spectacle that had immediately preceded these issues would have served to enhance these messages immensely, as the material from which these coins were made would have been associated with the material that was derived from acts of condemnation and destruction.

Religious abuses by the tyrant also present excellent opportunities for a successor. The many examples of tyrants celebrating the near-exclusive patronage of an individual god, or claiming to be amongst the gods themselves, or both, transformed the interpretations of a successor's pious acts. What would otherwise be considered a requirement of the position would thus be interpreted as a resurgence of order, an act of rescue from an offensive and dangerous ruler. Oblique references to their predecessor's conduct would have acted to further encourage this interpretation. The most powerful and direct example of this is Severus Alexander's response to Elagabalus. Alexander used the *Elagabalium* on the Palatine, to state



his message of contrast and renewal directly, with Jupiter 'Ultor', representing the resurgence of the traditional order of Roman religion and, uniquely, overthrowing and exiling the foreign invader. By portraying himself as rescuing Roman religion in this way, he thus also condemns Elagabalus as a disrespectful and distasteful foreigner.

Even the appearance of the city was used by successor emperors to hold themselves apart from their tyrannical predecessors. The fires that ravaged the city during the reigns of Nero and Commodus were most likely entirely coincidental accidents, and that of Vitellius an inevitable consequence of the siege of the Capitoline. Yet, by focusing their efforts on restoration, the Flavians and Severans could invite contrast between the appearance of the city in their own time and its appearance in the last days of the reign of their predecessors. The *Arae Incendii Neronis* demonstrate, to some extent, a recognition of the importance of this effect, as Domitian artfully accuses Nero of neglect following the fire of AD 64. The vast body of work on another important manifestation of visual contrast, in the practice of recarving portrait statues, also demonstrates a crucial element of this strategy. Even the most subtle expressions of difference between the two emperors becomes an avatar for the wider scheme of direct contrast, and the sheer prevalence of reworked statues in the immediate aftermath of *damnatio memoriae* means that this message was spread to every corner of the city.

Deliberate contrast by a successor, as part of the wider process of *damnatio*, is important to ensuring that the tyrant's 'tyranny' enters the cultural memory. The successor, evidently, had sufficient motivation to directly contrast himself with his predecessor, as is not only demonstrated by the wide variety of examples of this occurring, but also, crucially, by a variety of direct allusions to this practice. Although the true objective of the successors was, perhaps, not to ensure the tyrant's negative *exemplum* was preserved into the cultural memory, they were certainly interested in preserving the narrative of themselves as liberator from an oppressive regime. In order to achieve this, they needed to ensure the tyrant's specific negative characteristics were remembered, so that their own positive reversals were enhanced by comparison. In doing this, they helped to create a long-lasting negative *exemplum*. As the negative *exemplum* of the tyrant survives for much longer than just the reign of the immediate successor, later emperors can contrast themselves with the tyrant in a similar fashion, contributing further to the long-term survival of this memory figure in the city's cultural memory. This concept, I believe, can be explored in much more detail, especially with regards to the long-term survival of these memories. This is a key step in the aftermath of the destruction involved in *damnatio*, however, and establishing that this occurs deliberately and consistently is important to understanding *damnatio* as an attempt to reinvent and preserve the memory of a tyrant as a negative *exemplum*.

This is not the only way in which the memory of tyrants was manipulated after their death, however. Although the spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* does much to remove from the tyrant any remaining evidence of his positive achievements, there are some elements, such as in architecture, which are too practically useful or too problematic to destroy. These elements provided opportunities for successors to take advantage of the condemned tyrant beyond the immediate aftermath of their *damnatio*, and the utilisation of these opportunities long after the death of a condemned emperor was, I would argue, crucial to their negative characterisations being preserved in the cultural memory.

## Chapter 4: Appropriation of the material legacy of tyrants

### Re-assigning the positive identity

Restoration of the material legacies of honoured predecessors was something that was highly praised in Imperial Rome. Showing the works of these celebrated *exempla* the respect that they deserved would have demonstrated respect for the morals they represented. This seems to have been even more praiseworthy when the restorer forewent the opportunity to flaunt their actions by inscribing their own name on the restored building. Augustus is not only praised for this, but boasts about it in two separate passages in the *Res Gestae*.<sup>785</sup> However, interactions with the material legacy of predecessors that could have been interpreted as appropriative were met with widespread condemnation within Roman historiography.<sup>786</sup> The most common example of this we see is with regards to practice during the restoration of a structure and the commemoration of this via an inscription. Not restating the original name on the new inscription, or even simply inserting one's own name onto this inscription alongside the original, was seen as an act of disrespect to the founder.<sup>787</sup> For example, Domitian is explicitly condemned by Suetonius for this:

*sed omnia sub titulo tantum suo ac sine ulla pristini auctoris memoria*<sup>788</sup>

‘...but in all cases with the inscription of his own name only, and with no mention of the original builder’

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<sup>785</sup> *RGDA* 19.1, 20.1; Suet. *Aug.* 31.8-9; Dio 56.40.5.

<sup>786</sup> Stuart (1905) p.427-8; Zardorjnyi (2013) p.374-6.

<sup>787</sup> Zardorjnyi (2013) p.374.

<sup>788</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 5.1; Stuart (1905) p.448.

This was later codified in law, as we can see in the Justinian *Digest*, which restates the importance of keeping the name of the founder on display as the ‘fruit of his munificence’ (*munificentia suae fructum*).<sup>789</sup> Particularly revealing is the advice to provincial governors:

*Ne eius nomine, cuius liberalitate opus exstructum est, eraso aliorum nomina inscribantur et propterea revocentur similes civium in patrias liberalitates, praeses provinciae auctoritatem suam interponat.*

‘Lest his name, by whose liberality a building was erected, be erased and be substituted by another name, with the result of revoking similar gifts by citizens to their country, the governor of the province should use his authority to prevent it.’<sup>790</sup>

In a society which valued exemplary figures so highly, such disrespect was seen as a rejection of the virtues for which the founder stood, and an emperor who attempted to appropriate the buildings of respected ancestors could have expected to draw the ire of the senators.

The material legacy of condemned tyrants offered an excellent opportunity, therefore. Not only would there have been a lack of opposition to the appropriation of these monuments, but the aforementioned demonstration of disrespect would become a valued benefit – it would signal a rejection of the vices for which the tyrant stood. This was one of the primary non-destructive manifestations of *damnatio memoriae*, I suggest. Naturally, the clearest advantage to appropriating the building works of a tyrannical predecessor was that doing so would appear to add to one’s own programme. The positive connotations of the building for the founder would become subsumed into those of the reigning emperor. This would have been especially important in the cases in which the nature of the appropriated structure aligns well with the new regime’s ideological emphases. Furthermore, as appropriation deprived the tyrant of the last remnants of his material legacy, which held the memories of his positive identity, it further condemned this identity as false, and reattributed these positive qualities to the new emperor.

This consequence of *damnatio memoriae* has not been hitherto examined except in the biographies and analyses of the reigns of individual emperors. The most comprehensive analysis of a relationship of this kind has been done by Van Dam, working on the appropriation of the legacy of Maxentius by Constantine.<sup>791</sup> Maxentius’ programme of building in the city was the last extensive programme before the Western Empire’s collapse, and was the last real

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<sup>789</sup> *Dig.* 50.10.2.1.

<sup>790</sup> *Dig.* 50.10.2.3. See also *Dig.* 10.3.2, 10.7.1, all on the same subject.

<sup>791</sup> Van Dam (2007) p.94-5. See also Kalas (2015) p.47-50, 73-4.

attempt to maintain Rome as the Empire's capital. Constantine, as part of the *damnatio* of Maxentius following a successful usurpation, appropriated the public buildings he had dedicated in the city.<sup>792</sup> Most famously, the Basilica of Maxentius was claimed by Constantine as the Basilica of Constantine, the latter removing evidence of Maxentius' contribution and placing the well-known colossal statue of himself within the basilica to cement this claim.<sup>793</sup>

Appropriation of a tyrant's material legacy can take a number of different forms, which, naturally, vary by the nature of the material being appropriated. Firstly, as discussed, a structure can be restored, so as to create an association. However, appropriation can also be more directly manifested via a renaming of the structure – directly claiming the building as part of his own repertoire. This appears to have either required a significant change to the building to be justifiable, such as extensive expansion works or rebuilding, or required the building to have been undedicated on the death of the predecessor. The former is the case with the buildings renamed by Alexander Severus, while the latter is the case with the Forum of Nerva, built largely by Domitian.<sup>794</sup> Finally, there is the appropriation of building materials, or decorative elements, taken for use in other structures. The original positive ideological associations of this material are then carried with it to its new context and become associated with the new emperor. Removed from its intended placement, however, this action effectively denounces its original association with the condemned tyrant.

It should be noted that there is significant debate on the interpretation of this during the reign of Constantine – in particular, on the famous Arch of Constantine.<sup>795</sup> Some scholars forward the view that Constantine's use of elements from monuments of Marcus Aurelius, Trajan and Hadrian is complimentary, and intended to align himself with the famed 'good emperors' of the second century.<sup>796</sup> The interpretation of the practice under Constantine is, of course, outside of the scope of this thesis. It seems evident that in earlier periods *spolia* had explicitly negative connotations. As Kinney points out, spoliation of building materials was frowned upon, and the Justinian Code reveals that it had been legislated against by Vespasian.<sup>797</sup> Kinney thus argues that, prior to the arch of Constantine, the tradition of re-use was primarily associated with *damnatio*.<sup>798</sup> In the absence of any evidence to support a positive view of *spolia* in this period, therefore, it will be assumed that it has the negative

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<sup>792</sup> Davies (2000a) p.42; Van Dam (2007) p.94-99.

<sup>793</sup> Kalas (2015) p.68-73.

<sup>794</sup> See below, p.170.

<sup>795</sup> Elsner (2000) p.149-53; Galinsky (2008) p.15; Cooley (2012) p.322-3.

<sup>796</sup> Elsner (2000), especially p.153-4, 173-8; Hughes (2014) p.107-9; Kalas (2015) p.52-3.

<sup>797</sup> Kinney (1997) p.123-4; *Cod. Iust.* 8.10.2. Coates-Stephens (2003) details contemporary interpretations of the practice further, demonstrating at the very least that new building materials were preferred, even in late antiquity – *Cod. Theod.* 9.17.4; *Amm. Marc.* 27.3.8-10; Cassiodorus *Variae* 7.5; *Anth. Gr.* 8.173.

<sup>798</sup> Kinney (1997) p.129.

connotations implied by Vespasian's legislation. In addition, the intuitive links one could have made between the removal or destruction of building materials for use elsewhere, and the re-use of sculpture defaced or destroyed during *damnatio*, or even building materials seized as spoils of war,<sup>799</sup> certainly support the interpretation of *spolia* as having negative consequences for the memory of the founder of the target structure. In this period, therefore, it is important to recognise that there were no determined positive connotations for the re-use of building material, and several determined negative connotations.

Just as there are issues in interpreting the meaning behind the material evidence in this period, the literary sources also offer some problems. The key issue to address here is the reliability of the testimony of the *Historia Augusta*. The origin of this source has been debated for centuries, with suggestions ranging from the fourth to the sixth centuries, and the number of true authors ranging from the six as stated by the source itself to just one.<sup>800</sup> The *Historia Augusta* is unexpectedly therefore infamous for its unreliability, ranging from inaccuracy to embellishment and outright distortion.<sup>801</sup> More recently, it has been asserted that the entire work is less a genuine attempt at writing a history, and more of a series of literary jokes and references for Roman elites.<sup>802</sup> Nevertheless, the paucity of alternative sources for much of the period it covers is an issue that cannot be overcome. As Mehl stated, 'there is no way around the *Historia Augusta*'.<sup>803</sup> Therefore, it is worth assessing the work for its reliability.

Generally, it is agreed that the earlier lives are more trustworthy, at least in the case of the lives of non-usurper emperors, as they seem to have been based on the work of Marius Maximus.<sup>804</sup> As Rohrbacher states, more allusions to literature and culture can be found in the second part of the life of Elagabalus and the life of Severus Alexander 'as [the author] transitions from history to fantasy'.<sup>805</sup> We ought to, therefore, treat the later lives with especial suspicion. There has also been extensive analysis of the utility of the *Historia Augusta* as a source for the topography of Rome. Coarelli provides an excellent summary for the study of the works of Severus Alexander in the text, rejecting the survey of Domaszewski as overly-optimistic, but supporting the more conservative Ramsay.<sup>806</sup> Ramsay summarises that out of the eighteen interventions mentioned in the *Historia Augusta* as being conducted by Severus Alexander, eight are certain, five are probable and four are not proven due to a lack of possible

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<sup>799</sup> Coates-Stephens (2003) p.344-9.

<sup>800</sup> Mehl (2001) p.173-4; Mellor (1999) p.158-9, 161.

<sup>801</sup> Syme (1983) p.23-6; Mehl (2001) p.171-2.

<sup>802</sup> Mellor (1999) p.160-1; Mehl (2001) p.177; Rohrbacher (2016).

<sup>803</sup> Mehl (2001) p.171.

<sup>804</sup> Syme (1983) p.15-6; Mellor (1999) p.159, 162-3; Rohrbacher (2016) p.12, 57.

<sup>805</sup> Rohrbacher (2016) p.54.

<sup>806</sup> Domaszewski (1916); Ramsay (1935 & 1936); Coarelli (1987) p.439. See also Platner & Ashby (1929) p.xvi-xvii; Robathan (1939) p.515-16; Benario (1961) p.282-3.

archaeological documentation.<sup>807</sup> Though it is by no means a guarantee, and Coarelli advises that each case be examined individually, these results indicate that in terms of topography the *Historia Augusta* ought not to be dismissed offhand. For a case in which the only literary source for an event or object is the *Historia Augusta*, therefore, it will be examined individually. The *Historia Augusta*, though it is an extremely unreliable text, is still superior to complete silence from ancient sources, and can help us to interpret and understand often fragmentary and obscure material evidence.

In this later period, the nature of the material evidence changes, too. It is easy to see the aforementioned restorations, a crucial method of appropriation, as secondary in the context of building works. By comparison, they were a much less memorable part of the material legacy of any regime in the city. However, they must be considered in their true context. The third century, after the Year of the Five Emperors, saw a significant reduction in building programmes by reigning emperors – to the extent that Severus Alexander’s programme, largely consisting of restorations, has been called ‘the last major building programme in the city’.<sup>808</sup> When examining restorations in the third century, therefore, it is worth remembering that this is not the same period as that of Domitian or Augustus, in which building works in the capital were wide and expansive. New buildings are much rarer, meaning that restorations are much more impactful.

It is for this reason, in fact, that I chose to focus on the early third century, as the wave of restorations that occur here demonstrate the importance of restoration as a method of establishing legitimacy. I will also be focusing on the appropriation by the Severan regimes of the material legacy of tyrants from the first century. Thus far, most of the manifestations of *damnatio memoriae* that have been examined, both within this thesis and the scholarship in general, have taken place either immediately on the emperor’s death, or during the reign of the successor. This is firmly within the collective memory of the city – a period in which there are many living memories of the condemned tyrant. In contrast, these appropriations take place after the memory of the condemned had entered into the cultural memory. After this had happened, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, the condemned is defined as the culture of the city has decided to define him. Anything that attested to the intended positive image of the condemned emperor had either been directly destroyed during the ‘spectacle’ of *damnatio memoriae* or had become ostensibly disconnected with him via the erasure of dedicatory inscriptions. With the deaths of those who had memories of living under the tyrant, there was very little accessible ‘primary’ evidence of the emperor’s reign. Instead, the

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<sup>807</sup> Ramsay (1936) p.168-70. See also Benario (1961) p.284-90.

<sup>808</sup> Coarelli (1987) p.429; Lancaster (1998) p.171; Wilson, A. (2007) p.293.

narrative supported in the literary sources made after his death, portraying him negatively, persisted, as did the memories of his negative qualities that had been perpetuated by the interactions with his material legacy.

This is not to say that the structures that were built by tyrants that had not been thus far appropriated would truly lose their association with him entirely. We can assume that citizens, seeing or using a public building that was built by a tyrant but no longer bore his name, would be curious as to the original builder, so the memory of his association would survive through the oral tradition, in conjunction with the record in the historiography. For example, the earlier-discussed *Templum* of Jupiter Custos would, no doubt, have had its dedicatory inscription erased following Domitian's downfall. However, the construction of the building by Domitian was still recorded in the literary sources,<sup>809</sup> as was the story of his rescue from the siege of the Capitoline.<sup>810</sup> Therefore, while the *Templum* would have outwardly appeared to have no imperial dedicator, it was possible for some to know that Domitian had founded the building by consulting the sources or by hearing it from those who had.<sup>811</sup> Thus, while Domitian had been symbolically erased and this part of his material legacy had been separated from him, the memory of his founding of the building would have remained due to the lack of anything to replace this association. Indeed, it is possible that the citizens would come to interpret an 'un-authored' structure, associated with no emperor in particular, as one that had been built by an emperor who had suffered *damnatio memoriae*. However, the interpretation of these buildings by the populace would have changed significantly as the memory of the condemned changes in nature. A passer-by would recognise the negative characteristics he or she was already aware of in the fabric of the building, as many of the characteristics posthumously attributed to condemned emperors are exaggerations of otherwise positive attributes. An example of this would be the military achievement of Domitian. Since he was condemned as a military failure in posterity, Domitianic monuments that bore any triumphal connotations, such as any of his many arches, could have been seen as manifestations of his deceitful nature and hubris.<sup>812</sup>

In this chapter, I will be primarily examining the appropriation of the material legacy of first-century condemned emperors by Septimius Severus and Severus Alexander. Before beginning the discussion of Severus' interaction with the material legacy of tyrants, we ought

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<sup>809</sup> Above, p.92 n.402.

<sup>810</sup> The public *damnatio* of the dedicatory inscription and the statue within the temple may have acted to crystallise the association between Domitian and the structure, ironically.

<sup>811</sup> It is also possible that the association would survive in the social and cultural memories of Roman society if it continued to be relevant. For a summary of how this 'archival' memory is different to the 'functional' social and cultural memories, see Galinsky (2016) p.14.

<sup>812</sup> Dio 68.1.1; Suet. *Dom.* 13.2; Pliny *Pan.* 16.3, 20.4; Tac. *Germ.* 37; Tac. *Agric.* 39 (Index 1).

to address his deification of Commodus. All of our sources agree that Septimius Severus did indeed attempt to rehabilitate Commodus' legacy to some extent, offering some defence of him and strong-arming the senate into deifying him.<sup>813</sup> This decision is the subject of a great deal of scholarly attention, with debate occurring over the reasoning behind the move, how it was manifested in the policies and propaganda of the Severans, and the consequences it ultimately had for Commodus' memory. It should be noted that this does complicate the relationship between Commodus and Severus significantly, and makes it unique amongst the tyrant-successor relationships in the period under discussion. However, it does not necessarily change how Severus would interact with Commodus' legacy. It is possible, after all, that this rehabilitation is simply an inevitable consequence of Severus' self-adoption into the Antonine dynasty.<sup>814</sup> The fact that the senators react with surprise, as Severus had been condemning Commodus prior to this,<sup>815</sup> suggests that this was a political manoeuvre, meant to secure the legitimacy of his succession after the year of the five emperors.<sup>816</sup> The means by which Severus defends Commodus is also intriguing, as rather than praise Commodus or defend his actions directly, he censures the senators by comparison, and for their hypocrisy in condemning him.<sup>817</sup> Even if it were a genuine attempt to rehabilitate Commodus, or to capitalise on his possible popularity among contemporary Romans, as Hekster argues, this does not preclude the possibility that Severus wished to make known his distance from Commodus' style of rule.<sup>818</sup> In fact, if his rehabilitation of Commodus had caused as much concern among the senatorial class as seems to have been suggested by Dio and the *Historia Augusta*, a concerted effort by Severus to advertise his disdain for and distance from the more hated aspects of Commodus' rule may have been necessary to secure their loyalty. It is not the purpose of this thesis to assess the degree to which individual *damnationes* truly 'succeeded' in transforming the memory of the tyrants that suffered them. However, the fact that the historiography records Commodus as a tyrant suggests that Severus was not entirely successful in raising

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<sup>813</sup> Dio 76.7; SHA *Sept. Sev.* 10.3-4, 12.7-8. See also *consecratio* coins, *RIC* IV.1 Septimius Severus, nos 72a, 736a.

<sup>814</sup> Lo Cascio (2005) p.137-9. For how this self-adoption interacted with the deification of Commodus, see Champlin (1979) p.288-306; Hekster (2015) p.209-17.

<sup>815</sup> Dio comments on the astonishment he and the senators felt at Severus' sudden change of heart - 'he caused us especial dismay by constantly styling himself the son of Marcus and the brother of Commodus and by bestowing divine honours upon the latter, whom but recently he had been abusing.' (μάλιστα δ' ἡμᾶς ἐξέπληξεν ὅτι τοῦ τε Μάρκου υἱὸν καὶ τοῦ Κομμόδου ἀδελφὸν ἑαυτὸν ἔλεγε, τῷ γε Κομμόδῳ, ὃν πρῶτην ὕβριζεν, ἡρωικὰς ἐδίδου τιμὰς) – Dio 76.7.

<sup>816</sup> Champlin (1979) p.290; Langford (2013) p.85.

<sup>817</sup> Dio 76.8.

<sup>818</sup> As Hekster points out, Severus may have been aware of the differing opinions on Commodus' deification from different sections of the population, and so could simultaneously condemn Commodus' official *damnatio*, while praising Pertinax, the emperor who had carried this *damnatio* out. - Hekster (2002) p.186-91.



Commodus' reputation to a level equivalent to the other 'good emperors' of the Antonine dynasty, if this was what he had attempted.<sup>819</sup>

Severus Alexander also succeeded a condemned emperor, in the form of Elagabalus. Both were 15 years old when they assumed the throne, both were Syrian, and both were brought into power under the influence of powerful women of the imperial family. The measures Alexander took to place himself in opposition to Elagabalus have already been discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>820</sup> Both these Severan regimes have a powerful motive to demonstrate their contempt of tyranny; this could be achieved by interacting with the material legacies of past tyrants. Given the focus on the change over time of the perception of condemned emperors, the instances of appropriation will be examined chronologically. Although the focus is on the long-term, a short-term example is useful to illustrate the differences between short-term and long-term interactions. I will first scrutinise perhaps the most famous example of appropriation following the death of a tyrant, the Forum of Nerva, or *Forum Transitorium*. The exceptional circumstances that allowed Nerva to appropriate the forum so directly demonstrates the maximum potential of this approach well, while also serving to demonstrate the limitations of appropriation within the collective memory. The restoration programme during the reign of Septimius Severus offers a view into the potential advantages of choosing to restore a building associated with a long-condemned tyrant. Septimius Severus and his sons were able to be much more direct in their appropriation of these buildings than they ever could with structures that bore the name of a respected founder. The restorations and buildings of Severus Alexander will also be explored. This later restoration programme appears to imitate the appropriative methods utilised by Septimius Severus, but to an even more direct degree, deliberately renaming the baths of Nero after himself. The extensive renovations to the *Forum Transitorium* will also be analysed, as will the spoliation of the Domitianic trophies in the *Nymphaeum Alexandri*, which I will argue is connected to Alexander's changes to the forum.

The Material legacy of Domitian and the Severan restoration programme.

Though Severus Alexander is exceptional in the extent to which he appropriated the monuments of tyrants, it was not an innovation of his to do so. Since the monuments of Domitian have been discussed at length throughout this thesis, it is worth returning to them to examine how they were appropriated over time by different emperors, starting with the *Forum Transitorium/Nervae*, then looking at the restorations of the Pantheon and the *Porticus Octaviae* under Septimius Severus.

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<sup>819</sup> The accounts of Herodian, Cassius Dio and the *Historia Augusta* all characterise him as a tyrant.

<sup>820</sup> Above, p.148.

We have already seen how interesting Domitian is as a case study for *damnatio memoriae*, especially with regard to the initial spectacle of the destruction of his material legacy, and how successive emperors used the places associated with this legacy to further denigrate his memory. However, a great deal of his work was not destroyed, since it would have been impractical to do so. Domitian's civic buildings instead suffered one of two fates. They were sometimes disassociated from his name, such as with the stadium, which was only referred to as the 'stadium', with no mention of its founder.<sup>821</sup> Others, however, were appropriated by his immediate successors, such as was the case with the Forum of Nerva (Fig.45).<sup>822</sup> This monument, also known as the *Forum Transitorium*, had been left undedicated on Domitian's death.<sup>823</sup> Nerva is then said to have completed the forum, and dedicated it under his own name. It is Nerva's name, therefore, which appeared as the dedicator on the inscription of the temple of Minerva, as we know from drawings of the remains of the temple before it was demolished (Fig.46).<sup>824</sup> As the structure was unfinished on Domitian's death, we are unaware of the extent to which Nerva's 'completion' of the forum brought about any changes to its structure or ornamentation. It is nevertheless true that its Domitianic character survived intact beyond the changes made by Nerva. The numerous references to Minerva, the possible references to military triumph,<sup>825</sup> and its direct juxtaposition with Vespasian's Temple of Peace survive the transition of regimes.<sup>826</sup>

This association with Domitian continued to provide clues as to the true author of the Forum. This could be read as detrimental to Nerva's attempt to denigrate Domitian, as these elements would have betrayed the wholesale appropriation of the building by him, and that it was Domitian who had truly constructed this beneficial public structure. However, each of these elements are exemplary of a certain aspect of Domitian's negative character. The Minerva references, though inherently a pious tribute to an important goddess, would have been seen in the context of his unhealthy obsession with the goddess.<sup>827</sup> The military aspects, meanwhile, could serve to remind a viewer of his arrogance in this area despite his apparent failures. The proximity to Vespasian's Forum of Peace, furthermore, simply serves to emphasise the contrast between the virtuous early Flavians and the tyrant Domitian, and may even call to mind the rumours of his murder of Titus.<sup>828</sup> The distinctly Domitianic elements

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<sup>821</sup> For example, SHA *Sev. Alex.* 24.3; Dio 79.25.2; *Not. Reg.* IX.; *Amm. Marc.* 16.10.14. See also below, p.179.

<sup>822</sup> Richardson (1992) p.275; Meneghini (2007) p.72.

<sup>823</sup> Richardson (1992) p.167-9; Bauer & Morselli (1995) p.307-11.

<sup>824</sup> *CIL* VI 31296; Bauer & Morselli (1995) p.308.

<sup>825</sup> See discussion on p.183 regarding the 'Trophies of Marius'.

<sup>826</sup> Bauer (1976-7) p.118-9.

<sup>827</sup> See above, p.98.

<sup>828</sup> Above, p.85; Philostr. *VA.* 6.32; Suet. *Dom.* 6.3; Dio 66.26.2.

could have, therefore, served to emphasise the condemnatory implications of appropriation. That is, the forum was so obviously Domitian's project, as it embodied so many parts of Domitian's character in his posthumous role as a negative *exemplum*, that it was clearly and deservedly appropriated by Nerva. Furthermore, there is little risk of Nerva appearing hypocritical by endorsing such a Domitianic monument, and it is only in the context of Domitian's other monuments and actions that these elements of the forum became condemnatory. In isolation, the references to Minerva, the military connotations, and the connections to Vespasian would not have been seen as egregious, as Nerva had not demonstrated any unpleasant obsessions or hypocrisies in any of these areas.<sup>829</sup> The practicality of doing little more than applying his name to the forum thus did not conflict with the goal of appropriation, and the serendipity that the forum was never officially dedicated during Domitian's time adds further legitimacy to this move. Nerva thus benefits by having his name permanently associated with one of the imperial *fora* and by showing himself denigrating Domitian.

It seems that the name used to refer to the forum changes over time. At first, *Forum Nervae* is used, as is seen in Suetonius.<sup>830</sup> At this time, the memory of the dedication of the forum is still present, and the authorities are more directly concerned with Nerva's legacy, and thus more likely to encourage the 'official' name.<sup>831</sup> As Anderson notes, however, at some point in the third century the name appears to switch to *Forum Transitorium*, with the majority of late antique sources referring to the structure by this name rather than that of Nerva.<sup>832</sup> At first glance, this might seem to be an indication that Nerva's attempt to appropriate the forum was a failure, and that Domitian's original name for the forum survived, as the people attributed the work to the 'true' builder. However, there is no indication that *Transitorium* was the name which Domitian intended to give the forum. Statius, for instance, simply refers to it as *forum*, with no specific name given.<sup>833</sup> Additionally, it seems unlikely that Domitian would neglect this opportunity to place his name on the map, amongst those of the Divine Julius and Augustus.<sup>834</sup> It is more probable that this was a name that happened to be used by the people,

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<sup>829</sup> Elkins (2017) p.65-9.

<sup>830</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 5.1.

<sup>831</sup> Anderson (1984) p.130.

<sup>832</sup> SHA *Alex. Sev.* 28.6; Eutropius *Brev.* 7.23; Eus. *a. Abr.* 2109; Serv. *Aen.* 7.607; Anderson (1984) p.130; Richardson (1992) p.167-9; D'Ambra (1993) p.3. In addition, a fragment of the *Forma Urbis* (Stanford 16a) preserves the end of the forum containing the Temple of Minerva. It seems likely that the name on the map was *Forum Nervae* rather than *Forum Transitorium*, as we have no trace of the name on the surviving remnant, perhaps suggesting that the name was short enough to fit entirely within the lost portion.

<sup>833</sup> Statius *Silv.* 4.3.9-10. Grainger suggests that 'it should have been called after Domitian' but this is entirely speculative - Grainger (2003) p.55.

<sup>834</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 5.1; above, p.162.

it being a straightforward description of the forum's primary purpose – to connect the *fora* of Julius, Augustus and *Pax*.<sup>835</sup> Alternatively, it could have been a name instituted by the authorities at a later date – perhaps instigated by Severus Alexander's changes to the forum as reported by the *Historia Augusta*. Without evidence of what Domitian had intended the forum to be called, or what name the populace at large used to refer to the forum over time, it is difficult to draw conclusions on the 'success' of the *damnatio* by the use of the name of this building alone. However, it is important to note that the eventual popularity of *Transitorium* over *Nervae* does not necessarily reflect a complete failure on the part of Nerva. Indeed, it may imply the success of Severus Alexander's renewed appropriation of the forum, which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. The *Forum Nervae* (or *Transitorium*) is the archetypal example of appropriation, regardless of how truly successful it was in erasing Domitian from the building and replacing him with Nerva. It would have been rare that a monument was in a state where it was complete yet undedicated, so that the successor would need only inscribe his name on the architrave of the temple to legitimately call it 'his' work.

When Septimius Severus acceded to the throne, there was no such obvious choice available to him. Commodus had produced little to nothing in the way of public buildings in Rome. However, the fire of 192, as discussed, provided an enormous opportunity for restorations of older structures in the city. The restoration programme of Septimius Severus and his sons was certainly something of note.<sup>836</sup> It was an undertaking that attracted both praise and ire from the surviving historical texts. Cassius Dio takes the more critical approach, including an accusation that Severus ignored the original founders of the buildings he restored, while the *Historia Augusta* praises him for the exact opposite.<sup>837</sup> We have evidence that twelve buildings and two aqueducts were restored under the reign of Septimius Severus and his sons as co-emperors.<sup>838</sup> It is probable, furthermore, that even more structures were restored by Severus, but that they were not considered notable enough to be included in the written histories. Even if we just look at those restorations which are directly mentioned by the sources, it is easy to see why Grant states that the city was 'virtually rebuilt' by Severus and

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<sup>835</sup> Richardson (1992) p.167; Grainger (2003) p.55.

<sup>836</sup> Grant (1996) p.64; Wilson, A. (2007) p.292; Cooley (2007) p.393-4; Gorrie (2007) p.3.

<sup>837</sup> SHA Sev. 23.1; Dio 76.16.3 (c.f. 53.2.4); Stuart (1905) p.427; Cooley (2007) p.394; Lusnia (2014) p.91-2; Gowing (2016) p.128-9.

<sup>838</sup> Temple of Vespasian and Titus, *CIL* VI 938 = *ILS* 255; De Angeli (1992) p.159-62 De Angeli (1999) p.124-5. Temple of Peace: Tucci (2017) p.252-3. The paving of the *Forum Romanum*: Giuliani and Verduchi (1987) p.46-50. The *Rostra Augusti* in the forum: Filippi (2017) p.179. The *Domus Augustana* on the Palatine: Benario (1958) p.714. The *Atrium Vestae*: Benario (1958) p.716. The Temple of Vesta: Benario (1958) p.716. The Pantheon (see below). The Temple of Isis and Serapis: Benario (1958) p.717; Bucarelli (2013) p.208-10. The *Porticus Octaviae* (See below). The Theatre of Pompey: Benario (1958) p.718; *CIL* XIV 154. The Temple of *Fortuna Muliebris*: Quilici Gigli (1981) p.555-6; *CIL* VI 883. The *Aqua Marcia*: *CIL* VI 1247; Koehler (2013) p.120. The *Aqua Claudia*: *CIL* VI 1259; Koehler (2013) p.120.

Julia Domna, even if it is slightly hyperbolic.<sup>839</sup> The significance of these restorations was then capitalised upon in other Severan material media. Coins famously celebrate Severus as *restitutor urbis*, ‘rebuilder of the city’ (Fig.47) – a direct reference to Augustus’ claims to have rebuilt the city two centuries earlier.<sup>840</sup> The hugely important *Forma urbis*, also known as the Severan Marble Plan, is also revealing in this regard. This huge, 18m wide and 13m tall map of the city of Rome was carved into marble slabs that hung on the wall of one of the *aulae* (‘halls’) of the *Templum Pacis* in Rome.<sup>841</sup> It is argued by some scholars, particularly Trimble, that the map deliberately drew attention to Severus’ interventions in the city in particular.<sup>842</sup> Since they were so widespread, a map of the entire city would remind the viewer and provide a visualisation of the true extent of the restoration and building programme in the city.<sup>843</sup> Though it is true that this work was likely derived from an early Flavian version, the fact that Severan original buildings were highlighted on the map demonstrates the Severans recognised its importance as representative of their impact on the city.<sup>844</sup>

While one could easily argue that these restorations were necessary following the 192 fire, and thus the phenomenon could be explained as a purely practical one, it is likely that Septimius Severus was, much like Alexander after him, using restorations and renovations as a way to legitimise himself and his dynasty, as well as enter himself into the cultural memory of the city.<sup>845</sup> This is a view forwarded by multiple scholars.<sup>846</sup> They argue that a widespread restoration programme in Rome is not only an important manifestation of Severus’ restorative themes elsewhere, but that it also strengthens his links to Augustus, with whom Severus wished to be closely connected as a re-founder of Rome following a bitter civil war. Regardless of his true intentions, however, Severus ended up restoring several buildings that represented part of the material legacy of condemned emperors – either they had been constructed or previously restored by tyrants. I would suggest that these structures, in particular, offer possibilities for appropriation via restoration that similar structures untouched by tyrants would not.

One excellent demonstration of the potential of this approach would be the restoration of the *Porticus Octaviae* (Fig.49). This structure was restored after a fire by Severus

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<sup>839</sup> Grant (1996) p.64.

<sup>840</sup> Grant (1996) p.73; Christol (1997) p.30-32; Garcia (2005) p.372; Cooley (2007) p.393; Lusnia (2014) p.57-9; *RIC* IV.1 Septimius Severus, nos. 288-90, 753, 755, 757, 825.

<sup>841</sup> Taub (1993) p.9-10; Tuck (2015) p.292-3; Kalas (2015) p.67.

<sup>842</sup> Taub (1993) p.17; Trimble (2007) p.382-4.

<sup>843</sup> Grant (1996) p.64; Garcia (2005) p.372-3; Wilson, A. (2007) p.292; Lusnia (2014) p.154, 211.

<sup>844</sup> Taub (1993) p.18; Cooley (2007) p.394; Trimble (2007) p.382; Lusnia (2014) p.151-3; Tuck (2015) p.293.

<sup>845</sup> Legitimacy in particular would have been a key issue for Severus following the ‘Year of the Five Emperors’ in 193 – Gorrie (2007) p.3.

<sup>846</sup> Desnier (1993) p.612-15; Gorrie (2007) p.4-5; Cooley (2007) p.393-4; Koehler (2013) p.128.

and Caracalla in AD 203, and the archaeological evidence suggests that this reconstruction was extensive.<sup>847</sup> The inscription itself celebrates the restoration in very large letters, and does not make any mention at all of the original dedicator.<sup>848</sup>

IMP CAES L SEPTIMIUS SEVERUS PIUS PERTINAX AUG ARABIC ADIABEN[IC PAR]THIC  
MAXIMUS

TRIB POTEST XI IMP XI COS III [P P ET]

IMP CAES M AURELIUS ANTONINUS PIUS FELIX AU[G TRIB POT VI] COS PROCOS  
INCENDIO CORRUPTAM REST[ITUERUNT]

The emperor Lucius Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Augustus, greatest conqueror of  
the Arabs, the Adiabenes and the Parthians,  
with tribunician power for the 11<sup>th</sup> time, hailed *imperator* 11 times, consul 3 times,  
father of his country and  
the emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla) Pius Felix Augustus, with  
tribunician power for the sixth time, consul, proconsul  
restored this (building), ruined by fire.

One could easily state that, since the original structure was dedicated by Augustus or Octavia,<sup>849</sup> this indicates that Severus showed no concern for whether the structure was founded by a tyrant or not. However, while the original structure was Augustan, it was likely restored by Domitian after the fire of Titus in AD 80. Suetonius references libraries that had been destroyed by fire that were restored by Domitian, which could be those within the *Porticus*, and Viscogliosi observes physical evidence of a Flavian restoration, saying that the pediment is stylistically similar to the marble work in the Forum of Nerva and the *Porticus Absidata*.<sup>850</sup> When Domitian restored the structure, it is likely that he would have omitted the name of the founder on the inscription, and only mentioned his own name.<sup>851</sup> As Gorrie points out, the most likely reason that the new inscription did not mention the original founder is that the previous inscription did not either. Domitian had probably only celebrated himself, and so

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<sup>847</sup> Staffa (1997) p.226-7; Coarelli (1999) p.311; Viscogliosi (1999) p.141; Gorrie (2007) p.6-9; Lusnia (2014) p.96.

<sup>848</sup> *CIL* VI 1034; Richardson (1992) p.317; Coarelli (1999) p.311; Gorrie (2007) p.1; Claridge (2010) p.254.

<sup>849</sup> Suet. *Aug.* 29.4; Dio 49.43.8; Ov. *Ars am.* 1.69-70.

<sup>850</sup> Suet. *Dom.* 20.1; Claridge (2010) p.254; Richardson (1992) p.317; Viscogliosi (1999) p.141,3; Gorrie (2007) p.1.

<sup>851</sup> See above, p.162.

Severus wished to obliterate it as a condemnation of Domitian.<sup>852</sup> As has been mentioned, Viscogliosi also dates the pediment of the *porticus*, including the architrave on which the Severan inscription is put, to the Flavian period on stylistic grounds.<sup>853</sup> This would imply that whatever remained of Domitian's inscription was fully removed to make way for that of Severus and Caracalla.<sup>854</sup> This does not mean that Severus wished to obliterate the memory of the original building's founder, however, as the structure on the *Forma urbis* is still named as the *Porticus Octaviae* (Fig.50).<sup>855</sup> Though the structure became known as the *Porticus Severi* in the fourth century, and the *Historia Augusta* refers to it as having been built by Caracalla, I would argue that this was an unintended consequence of the structure only bearing their names on the inscription; it was unlikely to have been a deliberate attempt to fully appropriate the building, as Severus clearly wished to link himself to Augustus.<sup>856</sup>

The inscription itself illustrates well the long-term effects of *damnatio memoriae* on an emperor's work in the city. There was no specific founder of the building mentioned on the inscription when Severus came to it. There was therefore no competing claim to the structure at face value, and he could effectively appropriate it for his dynasty simply by restoring it. Furthermore, since the previous restorer was considered to be deserving of dishonour, he need not restrain himself when recording his own contribution to the building – the Severan names are displayed prominently and at length. In re-restoring the *Porticus*, in fact, he could argue that he was assisting in the condemnation of Domitian's memory by neglecting to mention him after the restoration. Denigrating Domitian in this way would also bring several other positive consequences for Severus. By contributing to Domitian's condemnation, he implicitly links himself to Nerva. Nerva was an unusually important individual for Severus. Severus claimed to be part of the Antonine dynasty, adopted by Marcus Aurelius.<sup>857</sup> As the earliest antecedent in this long lineage, Nerva held a position of unique importance, therefore. Not only was he the final emperor on inscriptions mentioning his entire lineage,<sup>858</sup> but Severus also erected a monument to specifically honour Nerva in Rome in AD 196, the centenary of Nerva's accession.<sup>859</sup> A link between Nerva and Severus through shared open disregard for

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<sup>852</sup> Gorrie (2007) p.1, 10. Elsner refers to this practice as 'inscriptional *damnatio*' when discussing Hadrian's rebuilding of the Pantheon which did not preserve Domitian's prior restoration inscription – Elsner (2003) p.218.

<sup>853</sup> Viscogliosi (1999) p.143.

<sup>854</sup> Viscogliosi (1999, p.143) suggests that there is evidence that the original decoration on the architrave was removed for the sake of the restoration inscription – could this be the Domitianic inscription?

<sup>855</sup> Viscogliosi (1999) p.142-3; Gorrie (2007) p.10.

<sup>856</sup> SHA Sev. 21.12; Staffa (1997) p.227; Cooley (2007) p.393; Gorrie (2007) p.4-5, 10-11; Viscogliosi (1999) p.142. See also *Ordo Bened.* 125; Tortorici (1989).

<sup>857</sup> See Lusnia (2004) p.540-41; Lusnia (2014); Hekster (2015) p.205, 210-27.

<sup>858</sup> Such as the very prominent one on the theatre in Ostia – *CIL* XIV 114.

<sup>859</sup> *CIL* VI 954 = *ILS* 418; Cooley (2007) p.386

Domitian's memory would help legitimise this connection, and thus his descentance from the Antonines.

That these advantages are largely specific to buildings previously claimed by condemned emperors is clear when compared to another building restored by the Severans: the Pantheon (Fig.48). The Pantheon is another example of a building that was restored by Severus and Caracalla despite their intervention in the building not being particularly substantial.<sup>860</sup> However, in this case, the previous restoration – in fact a complete rebuild – was accomplished by Hadrian, who not only preserved the name of the original founder, but did not include his own name at all.<sup>861</sup> Prior to this, furthermore, the building had been restored by Domitian. It is theorised by Stuart that Domitian had not preserved the name of the original founder and replaced it with his own, following the comment by Suetonius on Domitian's tendency to do this after a restoration.<sup>862</sup> This meant that Hadrian's choice to include Agrippa's name alone was drawing a direct contrast with Domitian's prior arrogance. Septimius Severus therefore needed to be a lot more careful when commemorating his restoration of the Pantheon, compared to that of the *Porticus Octaviae*. This resulted in the inclusion of only a very small inscription commemorating their restoration – small enough that it is barely noticeable by a casual observer today.<sup>863</sup> This was necessary for several reasons. They needed to avoid being seen as hubristically advertising themselves at the expense of the memory of the original builder, Agrippa, thus repeating Domitian's probable mistake on the same structure. As De Fine Licht points out, their overzealousness with regards to inscribing their name on restored buildings would have been compared to that of Domitian.<sup>864</sup> They also needed to avoid comparing poorly to the humility of Hadrian. Compared to the *Porticus*, one is much less able to make the claim that the Severans appropriated the Pantheon. It would appear, then, that restoring buildings that had been part of a tyrant's material legacy allowed Severus to appropriate them more completely.

Clearly, then, sometimes there were advantages to choosing to restore buildings of emperors who had suffered *damnatio memoriae*. Let us return to the twelve buildings and two aqueducts that we know were restored by Septimius Severus. Of these, six buildings had been either founded by, or restored by, the emperor Domitian. The *Porticus Octaviae* have already been mentioned. The *Domus Augustana* was, of course, originally built by Domitian on the

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<sup>860</sup> Staffa (1997) p.220; Cooley (2007) p.393; Lusnia (2014) p.94-5. The exaggeration on the inscription could reflect a degree of insecurity on the part of the Severans as to the legitimacy of their claim to have restored the building – De Fine Licht (1968) p.190.

<sup>861</sup> Boatwright (1987) p.43; Oppen (2008) p.111; SHA *Hadr.* 19.10.

<sup>862</sup> Stuart (1905) p.448.

<sup>863</sup> *CIL* VI 896.

<sup>864</sup> De Fine Licht (1968) p.190.



Palatine, and was expanded and restored by Severus.<sup>865</sup> The *Atrium Vestae* shows evidence of a Domitianic restoration, while the Theatre of Pompey is mentioned as one of the buildings damaged during the fire of Titus in AD 80, and therefore must have been restored by Domitian: both were later also restored by Severus.<sup>866</sup> Finally, the Temple of Isis and Serapis on the *Campus Martius*, which had been rebuilt by Domitian, was restored by Severus.<sup>867</sup> In all these cases, the most recent work that had been done to the structure prior to the Severan intervention had been undertaken under Domitian. Though these works are mostly Domitianic, the *Arcus Neroniani* section of the *Aqua Claudia* after it had been repaired by Severus was thereafter known as the *Arcus Caelemontani*, perhaps suggesting that Nero and other tyrants were targeted by him.<sup>868</sup> It is possible that at least the alignment with Domitian's works is entirely coincidental, and that this is entirely a result of the fires of AD 192 and 80 affecting a broadly similar area. However, the correlation implies that Severus may have recognised the potential of appropriating buildings and restorations that had been separated from their founder or most recent restorer via *damnatio*.<sup>869</sup> In any case, the advantages provided by restoring these structures were patent, as are the long-term consequences for the figure of the condemned emperor in the cultural memory of the city.

#### Severus Alexander's re-use and renaming

Severus Alexander found himself in similar circumstances to the founder of his dynasty, Septimius Severus. Much like Septimius, Alexander's early reign was heavily affected by the legacy of his immediate predecessor, a condemned tyrant. We have already seen in the previous chapter how Alexander attempted to contrast himself with this figure and to display his intent to restore the moral and religious character of the Roman state after it had been dismantled by Elagabalus. As part of this, he embarked on a significant restoration and embellishment programme in the city.<sup>870</sup> Though not quite as extensive as his predecessor, as

<sup>865</sup> Richardson (1992) p.115, 117; SHA *Sept. Sev.* 24.4-5; Sasso D'Elia (1995) p.43-4.

<sup>866</sup> For the Theatre of Pompey – Dio 66.24.2; Richardson (1992) p.385; Staffa (1997) p.219-20; Gros (1999) p.37. For the *Atrium Vestae*, see Scott, R.T. (1993) p.140.

<sup>867</sup> Eutropius *Brev.* 7.23.5; *CIL* VI 31464; Richardson (1992) p.211; Lavrenti (1996) p.107; Staffa (1997) p.221.

<sup>868</sup> *CIL* VI 1259; Mari (1993) p.100.

<sup>869</sup> Charles Davoine recently proposed this view at the third Conference on Roman cultural memory (2018, Sao Paulo - <https://sites.google.com/site/romanculturalmemory/home/2018-session/4-abstracts/davoine-charles-aix-marseille-universite-restitutor-urbis-the-buildings-restorations-of-septimius-severus-and-the-shaping-of-rome-s-imperial-memory>).

<sup>870</sup> See Ramsay (1936); Grant (1996) p.73. *Aqua Alexandrina* construction – SHA *Sev. Alex.* 25.3; Caruso (1993) p.60-61; Richardson (1992) p.15. *Bibliotheca Panthei* construction – Richardson (1992) p.59; Coarelli (1993) p.197; *P. Oxy.* 3.412. Temple of Jupiter Ultor on Palatine construction – above, p.151. *Dietae Mammaeae* construction – SHA *Sev. Alex.* 26.9; Richardson (1992) p.108. Temple of Isis Campensis embellishment – above, p.152. Temple of Dea Suria construction – above, p.152. Stadium of Domitian restoration – see below. Shrine of Jupiter Redux in *Castra peregrina* – above, p.152. Embellishment of the Forum of Nerva – see below. Restoration and embellishment of the *Thermae Neronianae* into the *Thermae Alexandrinae* – see below.

he lacked the opportunities presented by the fire of Commodus, one can still see that many of the restored buildings were founded by or recently worked on by tyrants. The two most significant of these, the transformations of the Forum of Nerva and the *Thermae Neronianae* will be examined in detail below, as they bore significant consequences for the material legacies of Domitian and Nero respectively.

Two of his 'lesser' restorations, however, are certainly worth noting. Firstly, the repairs to the Colosseum. Our textual source for these repairs is a brief reference in the *Historia Augusta*, with an issue of coins featuring the building and its immediate surroundings that appears to confirm this and offers a secure date of AD 223 (Fig.51).<sup>871</sup> At first glance, a restoration or embellishment to the Colosseum does not seem significant in isolation. Being such an important structure, it had been restored and embellished many times before. Though one of these times was by Domitian, it is unlikely that this would have been remembered after his inscription was erased following his *damnatio memoriae*, because he made no unique contribution to the structure.<sup>872</sup> However, we are also aware that Elagabalus had begun repairs following the fire of Macrinus in AD 217. Thus, it seems probable that Severus Alexander's restorations were continuations of those begun by Elagabalus, and thus he had appropriated his predecessor's work on the building.<sup>873</sup> As one of the only known utilitarian contributions that would have been made by Elagabalus, the appropriation of this contribution is especially significant, as it prevents it from ever being attributed to him in the minds of the citizens. Thus, Elagabalus' work in Rome would be exclusively remembered as that which consisted his vain attempts to enforce his religion upon the eternal city.

As stated in the previous chapter, the restoration of buildings damaged by fire can manifest a physical representation of the moral renewal which the successor emperor wishes to present himself as conducting. In this case, it is true that it is only this one building that was affected by the fires under Macrinus which can be attributed to Severus Alexander's restorations.<sup>874</sup> However, the singular significance of the amphitheatre to the people of the city, its sheer size, and the length of time that it was unusable grants its restoration unique importance. In addition, we are able to date large swathes of the building to the Severan restoration efforts, indicating that the damage to the Colosseum by the fire was quite significant.<sup>875</sup> Thus, Severus Alexander could achieve similar ideological goals from restoration

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<sup>871</sup> SHA Sev. Alex. 24.3; RIC IV.2 Severus Alexander, nos 33, 410-11; BMCRE VI, nos 156-8.

<sup>872</sup> Richardson (1992) p.7.

<sup>873</sup> Lancaster (1998) p.146; SHA Heliogab. 17.8.

<sup>874</sup> Dio 79.25.2-3.

<sup>875</sup> See Lancaster (1998), especially p.146, 169-71

following fire as Septimius Severus and Vespasian before him, though perhaps on a lesser scale.<sup>876</sup>

The repairs to the stadium, a Domitianic structure, should also be mentioned.<sup>877</sup> The building had acted as a substitute for the Colosseum since the latter was damaged in 217, and so their restorations represented a return to the status quo before the fire of Macrinus.<sup>878</sup> We are sadly unaware of the extent of these restorations, as the archaeological remains are scant.<sup>879</sup> However, in the Middle Ages, the building was misidentified as *Circus Alexandri* in the *Ordo Benedicti*.<sup>880</sup> This implies the existence of a commemorative inscription in the style of that on the *Porticus Octaviae*, with the original inscription honouring Domitian having been erased long ago – the *Porticus* was similarly misidentified. The *Ordo Benedicti* makes this mistake in fact, and immediately after naming the stadium the *Circus Alexandri*, names the Pantheon as the *Porticus Agrippina*, demonstrating the propensity of this source to misidentify buildings because of the names on their dedicatory inscription.<sup>881</sup> The appropriation of the stadium represents the final stage of the appropriation of Domitian's legacy. After this restoration, Domitian's public building works would have been completely disconnected from their true author and more closely associated with a subsequent restorer or dedicator. Finally, during its use as a substitute for the amphitheatre under Elagabalus, we hear from Dio that it gained a reputation for salacious activity, with brothels becoming incorporated into its arcades. According to the *Historia Augusta*, Severus Alexander's restoration of the stadium derived its funds directly from the money raised by Elagabalus' taxes on brothel keepers, prostitutes and catamites, preferring this to the funds going to the treasury.<sup>882</sup> The restoration work was thus another symbolic representation of Severus Alexander's restoration of traditional morals, in the same vein as the appropriation of the *Elagabalium* as the temple of Jupiter Ultor.<sup>883</sup> Both these restorations, and those to the *Circus Maximus*, furthermore, contributed to his image of a patron of athletics as discussed in more detail below.<sup>884</sup>

I would argue that the restoration of the Forum of Nerva under Severus Alexander was almost as significant as that of the *Elagabalium* in terms of how it affected the memory of a

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<sup>876</sup> See discussion of above, p.169; Lancaster (1998) p.146; Dio 79.25.2-3. Macrinus was also considered by posterity to have been tyrannical, or at least highly incompetent and unpopular, by contemporary historiographers - Herodian 5.2.3-4; Dio 79.15, 19-20, 41 esp.79.19.5, 79.20.3; Scott, A.G. (2018) p.58-9, 66-7, 100-101.

<sup>877</sup> SHA Sev. Alex. 24.3; Richardson (1992) p.366-7; Virgili (1999) p.341.

<sup>878</sup> Dio 79.25.2-3; Staffa (1997) p.218-9.

<sup>879</sup> See Virgili (1999) p.341-3.

<sup>880</sup> *Ordo. Bened.* 143; Ramsay (1936) p.426; Staffa (1997) p.219.

<sup>881</sup> *Ordo. Bened.* 125, 143.

<sup>882</sup> SHA Alex. Sev. 24.3.

<sup>883</sup> Discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>884</sup> Below, p.185; Coarelli (1987) p.444; Newby (2005) p.74-5.

tyrannical emperor. The building's earlier history – its construction by Domitian, and appropriation by Nerva – has already been discussed at length earlier in this chapter. Severus Alexander is said to have added to the building a series of statues honouring past deified emperors. Our sole source, unfortunately, for this important work is the *Historia Augusta*:

*Statuas colossas vel pedestres nudas vel equestres divis imperatoribus in foro Divi Nervae, quod Transitorium dicitur, locavit omnibus cum titulis et columnis aereis, quae gestorum ordinem continerent, exemplo Augusti, qui summorum virorum statuas in foro suo e marmore conlocavit additis gestis. volebat videri originem de Romanorum gente trahere, quia eum pudebat Syrum dici, maxime quod quodam tempore festo, ut solent, Antiochenses, Aegyptii, Alexandrini lacesiverant conviciolis, et Syrum archisynagogum eum vocantes et archiereum.*

‘In the Forum of the Deified Nerva (which they call the *Forum Transitorium*) he set up colossal statues of the deified emperors, some on foot and nude, others on horseback, with all their titles and with columns of bronze containing lists of their exploits, doing this after the example of Augustus, who erected in his forum marble statues of the most illustrious men, together with the record of their achievements. He wished it to be thought that he derived his descent from the race of the Romans, for he felt shame at being called a Syrian, especially because, on the occasion of a certain festival, the people of Antioch and of Egypt and Alexandria had annoyed him with jibes, as is their custom, calling him a Syrian synagogue-chief and a high priest.’<sup>885</sup>

As discussed more fully in the introduction to this chapter, the problems with this source are myriad. We should therefore not take its testimony at face value. We can determine, however, that such an act would have fitted well within Severus Alexander's known schemes. Dmitriev points out that the statues of the *divi* are not the only celebration of Alexander's deified predecessors that we are aware of.<sup>886</sup> The *Historia Augusta* also reports that he kept images of the ‘best’ (*optimos*) deified emperors in his household sanctuary, and the *Feriale Duranum* papyrus of Dura Europos, dated to c.225, records the *dies natales* and *dies imperii* of the deified emperors, demonstrating his deliberate self-connection to his revered predecessors.<sup>887</sup> Furthermore, we have some intriguing material remains that may support the *Historia Augusta's* account. Anderson suggests that several very fragmentary inscriptions found in the area of the forum are remnants of the *elogia* that would be attached to the portraits to label

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<sup>885</sup> SHA Sev. Alex. 28.6-7, Trans. Magie, D. (1924).

<sup>886</sup> Dmitriev (2004) p.218, 223.

<sup>887</sup> SHA Sev. Alex. 29.2; *P. Dura*. 54. Ramsay judges the placement of these statues to be probable, though on the basis of material evidence, the provenance of which is questionable - Ramsay (1936) p.168.

them (Fig.52).<sup>888</sup> Though the inscriptions are so fragmentary that by itself it would be difficult to definitively confirm them as *elogia* inscriptions, the findspot in combination with the above contextual evidence leads me to conclude that this identification is reasonably plausible. With this in mind, the arrangement of these statues ought to be considered. Anderson proposes that they were placed ‘around the precinct walls of the forum between the columns where they would correspond to the figures of divinities that would have stood above them in the attic’, imagining a scheme which calls to mind the *Sebasteion* of Aphrodisias in its juxtaposition of emperors and gods.<sup>889</sup> However, I would suggest an alternative location. As detailed by Bauer in his publication of his excavations and examinations in 1976, the terminal cornice of the attic on the outer walls of the forum shows evidence of fittings appropriate for colossal bronze statues (Fig.53), and a wall projecting up several meters to frame them from behind.<sup>890</sup> I would suggest that these statues are those of the *divi* added by Severus Alexander, possibly replacing earlier sculptures. There would certainly be enough of these cornices for them, and the possibility of a symmetrical arrangement would more closely align it with the *summi viri* of the Forum of Augustus, while the verticality would invoke the *clipei* portraits of the Forum of Trajan, both of which are discussed below. In addition, Bauer identifies evidence of decoration applied by means of pins on the front of the attics, suggesting that it could have been figures in bas-relief.<sup>891</sup> While this may have been the case in the original Domitianic/ Nervan scheme, I would propose that, since these would form the ‘bases’ for the statues of the *divi*, these could be the remnants of the *elogia* inscriptions. The large lettering present on the previously mentioned fragment would render these easily legible from ground level (Fig.55). The testimony of the *Historia Augusta* alone would not be enough for us to be confident about the existence of this work. However, the fact that it aligns with Alexander’s promotion of the *divi* in other ways, and that we have some potential archaeological remnants of the scheme supports this passage’s veracity.

One parallel is immediately obvious for this hypothetical reconstruction – that of the Forum of Augustus. This, in fact, is explicitly mentioned by the author as being the direct inspiration for this act. The two rows of *exempla* found in Augustus’ forum is probably the most well-known aspect of the building, and has been the subject of much scholarly

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<sup>888</sup> *CIL* VI 31296; *CIL* VI 40941; Anderson (1984) p.138-9. Paribeni originally noted that these inscriptions followed the format of the *elogia* which were placed on plates below the statues in the Forum of Augustus. He suggested that these could simply be remnants of the *elogia* from the Forum of Augustus that had travelled a short distance between the fora, but had difficulty in identifying the *summi viri* that they corresponded to – Paribeni (1933) p.477-8, no.132, 480 no.135.

<sup>889</sup> Anderson (1984) p.138.

<sup>890</sup> Bauer (1976-7) p.124.

<sup>891</sup> Bauer (1976-7) p.126-7.

attention.<sup>892</sup> Clearly, the colossal statues of the *divi* serve as an update to the existing scheme of Augustus, continuing the celebration of the *summi viri* by celebrating the best men of the imperial period. Furthermore, just as Augustus celebrated his famous ancestors of the Julio-Claudian family in his forum, Alexander chose to celebrate the deified predecessors in his own dynasty, as well as the Antonines from which Severus had claimed to descend.<sup>893</sup> However, this analogy seems imperfect at first glance. Rather than the century of portrait statues in the Forum of Augustus, honouring men of all kinds, this presentation allowed only a maximum of fourteen deified emperors to be displayed. The *Historia Augusta* reports that in addition to these statues in the Forum of Nerva, Alexander also moved statues ‘of the foremost men’ (*summum virorum*) to the Forum of Trajan.<sup>894</sup> This is something that correlates well with the archaeological evidence. Starting from the early-mid second century, we can see that honorific statues start to be placed in the forum, most commonly dedicated to individuals of note outside the imperial family, so Severus Alexander would have been continuing an existing practice.<sup>895</sup> This also built on the existing decoration in Trajan’s forum, which included *clipei* bust portraits (Fig.54, Fig.56) of famous men and members of the imperial family from nearer Trajan’s own time. Therefore, the *divi* in the Forum of Nerva are only part of Alexander’s overall scheme for expanding Augustus’ original *summi viri* display. In addition, they also imitate Trajan’s imitation, as the *clipei* portraits in the Forum of Trajan clearly also draw inspiration from the Forum of Augustus.<sup>896</sup> As an individual moved from the *Templum Pacis*, showcasing exemplary statues and skill from captured territories and pre-Roman figures,<sup>897</sup> he or she saw the display of the *divi* in the *Forum Transitorium*. They could then have proceeded through the *summi viri* of the Forum of Augustus to arrive in Trajan’s forum, featuring the images of imperial family members of the first century on its walls and illustrious men of later periods on statue bases (Fig.57). Severus Alexander’s may have completed this scheme, simultaneously recalling older imperial *exempla* while also featuring figures that would have still been within the social memory, such as those of Marcus Aurelius or Septimius Severus.

The many serious consequences for Domitian’s memory of placing the *divi* in the Forum of Nerva are clear. Most obviously, Domitian himself would certainly have been excluded from the statue group. The context for the statues was still noticeably Domitianic –

<sup>892</sup> See discussion of this above, p.22; Suet. *Aug.* 31.5; Dio 55.10.3.

<sup>893</sup> See above, p.173.

<sup>894</sup> SHA Sev. *Alex.* 26.4.

<sup>895</sup> E.g. *CIL* VI 41145, 41141, 1540, 1549. Discussed by: Geiger (2008) p.165-6; Fejfer (2008) p.386-7; Ramsay (1936) p.167. For a list of all honorific statues found in the forum, see Packer (1995) p.349. Note that none of these statues date to earlier than Trajan’s reign, meaning that statues referred to as the *summi viri* in the *Historia Augusta* are not the same as those that had been placed in the Forum of Augustus.

<sup>896</sup> Meneghini (2007) p.89; Geiger (2008) p.191-2.

<sup>897</sup> See above, p.121.

the multiple references to Minerva alone would ensure that this would never be entirely forgotten. The combination of the statues and their context, therefore, would serve to highlight the conspicuous absence of Domitian from the celebrated *divi*, as well as invite comparison between Domitian's conduct and those of the *divi*. The presence of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, for instance, would contrast their military successes in Dacia and Germania with the apparent false victories of Domitian against the Dacians and the Chatti.<sup>898</sup> Nerva's inclusion, furthermore, could have further cemented his own appropriation of the forum from Domitian, while explicitly celebrating the emperor whose reign was largely defined by Domitian's condemnation. The array of *divi* would not only align their memories with each other, however. For those passers-by who were somewhat familiar with the empire's chronology, all the absentees would simultaneously be called to mind. Thus, the tyrants of Rome would be united by their conspicuous absence, inviting association between them. For example, Domitian's perceived cruelty towards the senate would be aligned with that of Commodus, or his selfish wastefulness in the building of his palace would be compared to that of Nero and his *Domus Aurea*. Finally, the original inspiration for this act deepens its effect significantly. The explicit recognition of the use of Augustus as an *exemplum* in the *Historia Augusta* shows how direct this invocation of the exemplary past is here.<sup>899</sup> Severus Alexander is following an exemplary example of celebrating *exempla*. This also means that he is utilising the positive example of Augustus to condemn Domitian in the ways that we have just discussed. The contrast between how Alexander treats Domitian and Augustus here is extreme.

There is also a curious and useful case of spoliation, that I would argue is connected to this renovation of the Forum of Nerva. The 'Trophies of Marius' (Fig.58-9), erroneously named, are trophies that were found on the *nymphaeum Alexandri*, a terminal fountain of the *Aqua Julia*, which Severus Alexander had constructed.<sup>900</sup> The two trophies each represent a different conquered enemy of Rome. The left, as evident by the *rheno*, a distinctively Germanic fur cloak and the plumed helmet in the centre, represents a defeated German enemy.<sup>901</sup> The right can be identified as an eastern province, most likely Dacia, on the basis of the slippers and the barely-visible trousers underneath her long *chiton*.<sup>902</sup> Though the remains of the fountain are significant, the decoration is almost entirely lost. Fortunately, a depiction survives on a

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<sup>898</sup> Above, p.165.

<sup>899</sup> SHA Sev. Alex. 28.6.

<sup>900</sup> Not. Reg. V; Richardson (1992) p.270-1; Rambaldi (2013) p.181-2; Koehler (2013) p.127; RIC IV.2 Severus Alexander, no.59; BMCRE VI.nos 323-7.

<sup>901</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.197.

<sup>902</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.198. Tedeschi Grisanti points out that pairs of trophies that celebrate a victory in the west and east are common, suggesting that if the left trophy celebrates a Germanic victory, the right ought to celebrate an Eastern victory, which could include Dacia – Tedeschi Grisanti (1977) p.62.

medallion struck in AD 226, revealing a monument which is markedly triumphal in character – victories in the large central niche flanked by trophies, topped with a *quadriga* flanked by victories.<sup>903</sup> The ‘unusual’ shape of the *nymphaeum* is proposed by Tedeschi Grisanti to have been caused by it having been built around a Domitianic triumphal arch.<sup>904</sup> While this would be a very compelling example of the appropriation of Domitian’s material legacy, I would agree with Richardson in saying that this suggestion is unconvincing.<sup>905</sup> The shape of the *nymphaeum* alone is not reason enough to justify the presumption of a previous monument in its place in the absence of the discovery of certifiable Domitianic-era brickwork at its core. The character of the trophies themselves also go some way to disprove this suggestion. Tedeschi Grisanti’s suggestion for the reconstruction of the original arch would place these trophies on the top of the arch.<sup>906</sup> As can be clearly seen, the rear of the trophies (Fig.59) are comparatively very simply decorated and flat compared to their front. She argues that this is because the arch had a primary and secondary facing, and that since viewing the arch from the secondary facing was less important, less concern was given to the fidelity of the sculpture.<sup>907</sup> She says that the present-day placement of the trophies at the top of the steps to the Campidoglio lends credence for this view, as the rear is not hidden in any way.

None of these arguments is particularly convincing.<sup>908</sup> There is no comparative example, as far as I am aware, of sculpture being significantly less detailed in the rear despite being displayed in such a way that it can be easily viewed from all angles. In this case it is not only less detailed, it is flattened, making it even more likely that it was originally displayed backed against a wall.<sup>909</sup> Michaelangelo’s choice to display them in the Campidoglio is not sufficient justification for this viewpoint either. They were, famously, misidentified as the trophies that Marius dedicated after his victory over the Cimbri.<sup>910</sup> This exaggeration of their historical importance would have significantly contributed to the decision to display them in the Renaissance. In addition, they would have been largely displayed on account of their antiquity. Finally, an intact triumphal arch of Domitian is unlikely to have survived with its decoration intact for 130 years following his *damnatio memoriae*. We hear from Dio

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<sup>903</sup> Gneccchi (1912) 2.82.20, p.99 no.8.

<sup>904</sup> This also explains, she argues, the presence of the Domitianic trophies on the monument, which she says would have been difficult to move - Tedeschi Grisanti (1977) p.67-68.

<sup>905</sup> Richardson (1992) p.171.

<sup>906</sup> Tedeschi Grisanti (1977) p.68.

<sup>907</sup> Tedeschi Grisanti (1977) p.68.

<sup>908</sup> See the doubts expressed by Lepper – Lepper (1978) p.212.

<sup>909</sup> Looking at comparative examples, such as the Farnese Hercules from the baths of Caracalla, reveals that even in cases where the sides would have been partially blocked from view, the sculpture is still rendered fully in the round, unlike the rear of the trophies – Gensheimer (2018) p.166, 178-86; Uffizi Galleries, 1914 no.138.

<sup>910</sup> Barkan (1999) p.134-5.



specifically that Domitian's triumphal arches were destroyed following his death.<sup>911</sup> While it is certainly plausible that one or more escaped immediate demolition, it seems improbable that any would have escaped the destruction and then be continuously maintained to the extent that the sculptural decoration would have been in a re-usable state more than a century later.

Further to Tedeschi Grisanti's proposal, there is a theory that contests the Domitianic date of the trophies, instead dating them to the Trajanic period. This is a theory that was first proposed by Lepper, but has been recently much further developed by Longfellow.<sup>912</sup> As first pointed out by Lepper, the Domitianic quarry mark on the underside only offers a *terminus post quem* for the commissioning of the statues.<sup>913</sup> Both scholars use the example of the Column of Antoninus Pius as a comparandum, the base of which was quarried in 106, but carved and set up in 161.<sup>914</sup> Longfellow also aligns the trophies with Trajan on stylistic grounds. She points out that the shields on the front and back are typical of Trajanic trophies, with very few Flavian examples, and that the trophies that appear on the *victoria* scene on the Column of Trajan (Fig.60) are very similar, and feature similar arms. She also notes that the Germanic trophy could represent the Dacian's Germanic allies in Trajan's Dacian wars, and that the left trophy on Trajan's Column also wears the *rheno*.<sup>915</sup> On this basis, she suggests that the trophies are of Trajanic date, and were retrieved from their original monument or from storage by Severus Alexander.<sup>916</sup> Severus Alexander would thus have been innovative in his use of *spolia* of 'good' emperors, predicting Constantine later.<sup>917</sup>

These arguments are also not without fault. It is true that the quarry mark offers only a certain *terminus post quem* for the erection of the trophies. However, the comparison to the Column of Antoninus Pius is a poor one. I would argue that if the block of marble used for the trophies were left unused at the end of Domitian's reign – which Longfellow implies by suggesting they were carved under Trajan - then there is a significant chance that Domitian's name would have suffered due to *damnatio memoriae*. Though this alone is not a guarantee that they were set up under Domitian, as *damnatio* was not universal, it suggests that they were in place at the time of Domitian's death and the quarry mark was thus not visible. I would also disagree with aligning the trophies with Trajan on stylistic grounds as closely as Longfellow suggests. The start of the style of having shields both on the front and back of the trophies is

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<sup>911</sup> Dio 68.1.1.

<sup>912</sup> Lepper (1978) p.212-3; Longfellow (2011) p.198-202.

<sup>913</sup> *Imp. Dom. Aug. Germ. per Chres. lib.* The name of the freedman who oversaw quarrying the stone further is referenced on another earlier inscription from Asia (*SEG* 38-1073), also of Domitianic date.

<sup>914</sup> Lepper (1978) p.212; Longfellow (2011) p.200.

<sup>915</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.200.

<sup>916</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.201-2.

<sup>917</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.202.

difficult to determine. Of the two examples that Longfellow uses to demonstrate that this style was not present in Flavian art, a gladiator's parade helmet from Pompeii and a Domitianic cuirass from the Louvre, the former cannot be dated for certain to the period in question, and the latter appears to show a rough image of the rear shield on the left side (Fig.61). Furthermore, there is a significant difference between these trophies and those of the Column of Trajan. On both of the latter group, the *draco* features heavily. If the 'Trophies of Marius' were a celebration of Trajan's victory over the Dacians and their Germanic allies, the presence of the *draco* would make this a great deal more direct to the viewer. Furthermore, though he bears the title *Germanicus* for his victories prior to his reign, I am unaware of any instance in which Trajan celebrates these victories after his conquest of Dacia. On the other hand, Domitian's 'double triumph' is well documented.<sup>918</sup> Finally, by Longfellow's own admission, this act of 'programmatic' *spolia* is anachronistic. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, at this time the appropriation or spoliation of the works of prior emperors is explicitly condemned or forbidden, though tyrants were unlikely to have been protected in this way. Longfellow draws a comparison between Severus Alexander's use of these images and the propensity of some emperors, including Alexander, to move statues around Rome to recontextualise them.<sup>919</sup> However, this is again a false equivalence, as the nature of the trophies (as lacking a well-defined rear side, and lacking a base) suggests that they should be interpreted as architectural features rather than free-standing statues.

I would instead propose that the trophies came from a Domitianic monument. Clearly, it would need to have been a Domitianic building that survived into the third century, had space for them to be displayed against a wall with a victory in the centre, and was interacted with by Severus Alexander. The most likely candidate, therefore, would be the Forum of Nerva. Though this proposition is, to some extent, unprovable, and we may never know for certain the provenance of the marble 'Trophies of Marius', I believe that the circumstances above make this structure the most likely candidate, if we are to assume that they were looted from their original context by Alexander. For their location in their original context, I would suggest, the top of the uppermost cornices on the architraves of the semi-engaged columns along the outer walls – the same proposed location as the subsequent statues of the *divi*. The existence of sculpture there before Alexander's installation of the colossal bronze statues is suggested by the higher outer wall that would frame them, and the dimensions of the trophies are appropriate for this location. This placement would also make sense aesthetically. The trophies would not have been visible from their direct rear, as the wall blocks the view to their backs.

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<sup>918</sup> Tedeschi Grisanti and Picard suggest that the Column of Trajan trophies were based on the 'Trophies of Marius'. Tedeschi Grisanti (1977) p.63; Charles-Picard (1957) p.390-1. Tedeschi Grisanti (1977) p.58.

<sup>919</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.201.

However, viewers standing in between the engaged columns could feasibly see the rear side from below. A roughly sculpted rear side would make sense here, as it would be visible, but only to those curious passers-by who were to specifically seek it out. The two trophies offering a sense of symmetry would also make sense if they were opposite each other, or surrounded one of the smaller entrances to the other *fora*. Bauer, in fact, reconstructs the northwest end of the forum, featuring the two exits to the *subura* surrounding the temple of Minerva, as featuring the trophies above each entrance (Fig.62). Though he does this without any apparent justification, the fact that such an arrangement was intuitive to him suggests that the trophies being placed there is not aesthetically displeasing. Their removal to the *nymphaeum Alexandri* would also then coincide with the installation of the new statues - they would have been removed, primarily, to make way for Alexander's additions to the Forum of Nerva.<sup>920</sup>

The removal of the trophies from the Forum would represent a condemnation of Domitian's misrepresentation of his military achievements in the war against the Chatti and the Dacians. It would also have meant the removal of the last element in the forum which would have been definitely Domitianic. While the references to Minerva, which certainly remained, call Domitian to mind, they are not unique to him. Celebration of conquests of the Chatti and the Dacians in one group, however, can only be associated with Domitian's 'double triumph'. Yet, removed of their original context the link to Domitian is not immediately obvious to the untrained eye. As Longfellow points out, '...a select few might have recognised the statues as related to Domitian or Trajan and made associations accordingly. However, the vast majority probably would not have been able to make such a specific connection, but instead have read the obviously re-used pieces as generic references to the imperial past and triumphal heritage'.<sup>921</sup> On the contrary, I would argue that the memory of their original context in the Forum of Nerva remained and their connection to this monument would remain in some form. Thus, it was possible for a contemporary observer to have been reminded of where the monument once stood, and thus the condemnatory message of the spoliation of the trophies would still be propagated, while Alexander would simultaneously have been able to fully appropriate the positive associations of the trophies.<sup>922</sup> On the *nymphaeum*, the trophies would be seen in the context of Severus Alexander's own campaigns against the

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<sup>920</sup> There is also the possibility that the trophies were removed or stored nearer to Domitian's death – perhaps being constructed as part of Domitian's plan for the forum, and not being put up by Nerva before he dedicated the building. In this case, the consequences for Domitian's memory of spoliating the trophies in this way would be lessened, as none would recognise their original intended context. Some, however, may have been able to recognise the specifically Domitianic connotations of the trophies, as alluding to Domitian's 'double triumph'.

<sup>921</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.202.

<sup>922</sup> Longfellow (2011) p.202 – a Roman observer 'might be reminded of the original monuments on which they once stood'.

Germanic tribes, as Kinney points out.<sup>923</sup> This makes this a very effective example of condemnatory spoliation. Not only is Domitian condemned for his ‘false victories’ via the trophies’ removal, but Alexander is able to easily disassociate the trophies from the tyrant to the extent that he revives the original positive message that the sculpture had intended to portray.

Another particularly significant instance of Severus Alexander reworking an existing structure is his work on the *Thermae Neronianae*. The bath complex was originally commissioned by Nero at some point between AD 60 and 64 – before the fire which has been covered extensively thus far.<sup>924</sup> Apart from the fact that it included a gymnasium, we have little insight into the layout of the original structure.<sup>925</sup> The baths are referred to positively in both Martial and Statius, the former most notably quipping ‘what worse than Nero, what better than his baths?’<sup>926</sup> Most significant for this discussion, however, is the reconstruction and renaming of the baths by Severus Alexander, occurring in AD 227.<sup>927</sup> We hear from the *Historia Augusta* that the old baths were extensively renovated and expanded upon and that the baths were renamed accordingly to the *Thermae Alexandrinae*.<sup>928</sup> Cassiodorus confirms the renaming in his chronicle, and the *Alexandrinae* name is used almost universally afterward, though sometimes corrupted to *Alexandrini*.<sup>929</sup> The one exception is a poem of Sidonius Apollinaris, in which he refers to the building by its old name – as the baths of Nero.<sup>930</sup> The plan of the baths can be reconstructed in some detail (Fig.63), which allows us to make some assumptions as to what facilities were available in its latest stage. The plan appears to reveal a *natatio* featuring a backdrop of a theatrical *scaenae frons*, flanked by large *palaestra* on either side, leading to a *frigidarium*, *tepidarium* and finally a *caldarium* jutting out from the south wall.<sup>931</sup> However, the surviving remains of the brick walls of the complex are all Severan in character, making it impossible to determine for certain which elements belong to the Severan reconstruction.<sup>932</sup> Only two elements, as Ghini relates, can certainly be attributed to the

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<sup>923</sup> Kinney (1997) p.143.

<sup>924</sup> The exact date varies depending on the source – Suet. *Nero* 12.3; Tac. *Ann.* 14.47; Eutropius *Brev.* 7.15; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 4.42, 5.19; *CIL* VI 8676, 3052, 9797 Ghini (1999) p.60; Richardson (1992) p.394; Nielsen (1990) p.2.

<sup>925</sup> Suet. *Nero* 12.3; Tac. *Ann.* 14.47; Philostr. *Vit. Apoll.* 4.42. See the discussion on the archaeological remains below.

<sup>926</sup> Mart. *Ep.* 7.34.4, 2.14.13 2.48.8, 3.25.4, 12.83.5; Statius *Silv.* 1.5.62. The quotation, from Mart. *Ep.* 7.34.4, was used by Davies as the title for her work on *damnatio memoriae* in architecture - Davies (2000a).

<sup>927</sup> Jer. *a. Abr.* 2079.

<sup>928</sup> SHA Sev. *Alex.* 25.2; Beste & Hesberg (2013) p.319.

<sup>929</sup> Cassiod. *Chron.* 227; *Chron.* 147.20. For analysis, see Huelsen (1927) p.200, 212, 326-27, 455-56; Richardson (1992) p.394; Staffa (1997) p.216-8.

<sup>930</sup> Sid. *Apoll. Carm.* 23.495.

<sup>931</sup> Ghini (1999) p.61; Richardson (1992) p.395.

<sup>932</sup> Ghini (1999) p.62; Ghini (1988) p.125; Staffa (1997) p.216.

original Neronian structure – a covered bathtub in *opus signinum* found in the southwest under the modern Palazzo Madama, and an *opus spicatum* pavement found underneath the church of San Luigi dei Francesi in the northwest – under one of the *palaestrae*.<sup>933</sup>

The choice to restore these baths afforded Severus Alexander many advantages. Firstly, it was one of the few buildings in which the association with the tyrant survived the tyrant's *damnatio memoriae*. The continuing references to the baths 'of Nero' both in literature and on inscriptions attest to this. This was probably due to the multiple other bath complexes in the city – it was not practical to call them simply 'the baths' as it could be confused with the other buildings. This meant that the memory of Nero's connection to the building was particularly strong, and thus the denigration signalled by renaming the structure was far more direct and recognisable. The *Thermae* also fit in well with an apparent ideological focus of Severus Alexander. As Newby observes, patronage of athletics seems to have been a focus for his reign.<sup>934</sup> He instituted the *Agon Hercules*, restored the stadium and is said to have been responsible for the athletics imagery visible in the remains of the baths of Caracalla.<sup>935</sup> The *Thermae Neronianae* were clearly distinguished for their gymnasia – Sidonius Apollinaris directly praises them, while both Suetonius and Tacitus single them out for mention when discussing the founding of the structure.<sup>936</sup> We can also determine with relative certainty that at least one of the two *palaestrae* in the bath complex was present in the original Neronian plan, from the Neronian *opus spicatum* paving that has been discovered in this part of the structure. Considering Nero's own patronage of the athletics – he instituted the *Neronia* games – it is likely that the original structure featured some references to athletics or the Olympiad in its décor. Appropriating this building thus made sense for Severus Alexander, as it fitted into his wider ideological scheme perfectly while simultaneously removing a competing claim for 'chief patron' in the city. Though we cannot know to what extent this was due to the actions of Severus Alexander or Nero, the final plan of the baths demonstrates this, as about 25% of their area is occupied by the *palaestra* alone.<sup>937</sup> When compared to the baths of Caracalla, 16%,<sup>938</sup> or the baths of Trajan, 15%,<sup>939</sup> it is clear that the *Thermae Alexandrinae* dedicated an unusually large proportion of its space to athletic facilities.<sup>940</sup> There is also the figured column capital featuring a victorious athlete, retrieved from the *Thermae* and argued

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<sup>933</sup> Ghini (1999) p.62; Ghini (1988) p.124.

<sup>934</sup> Newby (2005) p.74-5.

<sup>935</sup> Newby (2005) p.74-5; SHA *Sev. Alex.* 27; 35.4.

<sup>936</sup> Sid. Apoll. *Carm.* 23.495; Suet. *Nero* 12.3; Tac. *Ann.* 14.47; Moorman (2003) p.378.

<sup>937</sup> Approximately 0.007km<sup>2</sup>, of a total 0.028km<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>938</sup> Approximately 0.009km<sup>2</sup>, of a total 0.057km<sup>2</sup> (only including the central block).

<sup>939</sup> Approximately 0.012km<sup>2</sup>, of a total 0.074km<sup>2</sup> (only including the central block).

<sup>940</sup> Only the central building of the complex is counted in these calculations.

by Castagnoli to be from the Severan restoration.<sup>941</sup> If it is indeed datable to Severus Alexander's reconstruction of the structure, then this capital represents not only his recognition of the building's strong existing associations with athletics, but also his intent to renew this association in his restoration.

## Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, a memory figure within the cultural memory needs to be interacted with in order to survive. After all, each memory figure represents a memory that serves a purpose; something that is remembered to teach a lesson or serve as an example. Therefore, if a memory is not interacted with within cultural memory, it has no reason to be remembered and is forgotten. These instances of appropriation long after the condemnation of a tyrant are crucial to understanding the ultimate consequences of *damnatio memoriae*. The later interaction gives clues as to the nature of the negative *exemplum*, and demonstrates the use of the memory of the condemned as such. They also demonstrate how this memory survives within the cultural memory of the city, as later regimes recognise the advantages of denigrating their predecessors. This interaction is, furthermore, transformative in itself. The appropriation of the surviving reminders of the tyrant's originally intended positive identity has two main consequences. Firstly, the act itself offers a confirmation of one common aspect of a tyrant's negative characterisation – that they exaggerated their achievements, or acted hypocritically. The sanctioned removal of the visual identifiers of their own supposedly false claims acts, of course, as a condemnation for these claims as well as a 'correction' of the material record of the city. The second is that these positive elements would then become associated with a different emperor entirely. Though this could be interpreted as simply an extension of the aforementioned process of denying the positive legacy of a tyrant through destruction, I would argue that this has further consequences. This disassociation of the legacy of a tyrant from his identity leaves an open question as to whom the positive aspects truly belong. The inscriptions of the buildings that have been examined in this chapter, for example, could be erased and their connection to the condemned removed, ostensibly. However, since a building must have a builder, its connection to them remains in the memory of the city, through archives and discourse. The act of appropriation has the potential to answer this question, and deny any connection to the true, condemned, founder. This effect would become more potent over the course of time, as the memory of the appropriative act is forgotten and the memory of the tyrant continues to naturally fade.

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<sup>941</sup> Castagnoli (1943-5) p.9-10, 14.

The examples of this examined here demonstrate concentrated apexes of this approach. Nerva's appropriation of the Forum of Nerva serves as an instance of appropriation in the short-term, in a near-unique case in which a structure could be legitimately fully appropriated by a successor as it had not been dedicated by the time of the predecessor's death. The décor of the forum which was to be Domitian's contribution to the imperial *fora* complex embodied many of his traits, which had been negatively twisted since his death. These elements served to remind the visitor of the structure's origins, while its name and dedicatory inscription attributes its practical applications to Nerva. Thus, the forum was rendered a permanent monument to the appropriative act in itself, and thus to Domitian's (supposedly) deserved denigration and disgrace. The restoration of the building works of Domitian by Septimius Severus and his co-emperor sons exemplifies the advantages offered by restoring the monuments of condemned tyrants. Not only did the absence of a previous dedicator allow Septimius' name to become the name dominantly associated with the structure, but it also allowed Severus' inscription to be much more prominent. This can be seen when the restorations of the buildings of Domitian are compared to buildings which still bear the name of the respected founder. Septimius, after the deification of Commodus and his posthumous adoption by Marcus Aurelius, was left in a very difficult situation. It would have been important to him to demonstrate his disdain for tyrannical activities to allay the fears of his contemporaries that he would imitate Commodus' character without directly condemning him, while also proving his legitimacy as a successor to the 'good emperors' of the Antonine dynasty. Domitian, therefore, provided an excellent target. He would have been, by Septimius' time, remembered as an uncomplicated villain, and denigrating him via appropriation would have aligned Septimius with the emperors of the early Antonine dynasty – Nerva, Trajan and Hadrian. Their impact on the city of Rome had been, to some extent, largely determined by how they interacted with the legacy of Domitian.

Severus Alexander seems to have taken a different approach. Building on the scheme of Septimius Severus, Severus used appropriation to build a legacy for himself and his name in the city of Rome that may have been beyond his means if he were to have pursued a more traditional building programme. The Forum of Nerva was re-appropriated by further additions. The statues of the *divi* served to dilute the still distinctly Domitianic character of the building, and the absence of Domitian from this display of imperial *summi viri* would have been an effective condemnation of his character, made more potent by the setting. If the 'trophy of Marius' were indeed removed from the forum, furthermore, the changes to the Forum of Nerva would have included removing especially problematic elements of the decoration, and removing them to a context in which their connection to Domitian would no longer be considered. The renaming of the baths of Nero to the baths of Alexander, and the extensive

extension and remodelling that came with it, demonstrates that Alexander recognised the opportunity that these monuments provided. These baths, however, as the last remaining separate public building that was built by Nero that had not been appropriated or destroyed, represent a much more powerful condemnation of Nero than the other actions had been for Domitian – the final, complete erasure of Nero’s public building programme.



## Chapter 5: The *Colossus Neronis*

There is one additional case study that ought to be examined here. Thus far we have only examined individual case studies within individual separate thematic contexts. The material legacy of each tyrant has, in turn, been examined for its significance in only one consequence of *damnatio memoriae*. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the full consequences of *damnatio* for the memory of a condemned emperor, and how this is achieved through interactions with his material legacy, we ought to look at a monument which was repeatedly interacted with throughout its long and illustrious history.

The *Colossus Neronis* is an excellent summation of the myriad consequences of *damnatio memoriae* upon a tyrant's material legacy. The Colossus was appropriated and reappropriated over the entire course of our period. This can act as a representation of many of the ways in which *damnatio memoriae* can modify the memory of a condemned emperor, both within and beyond the immediate acts of destruction. In addition, the symbolic status of the Colossus within Roman cultural memory, its multi-faceted nature and its sheer scale mean that any messages implied by changes to it are significantly amplified.

An examination of the Colossus' early history is worthwhile, especially when some of the key facts are still disputed. The main textual sources for the statue, in order of significance, are Pliny the Elder (Index 13), Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Martial.<sup>942</sup> Pliny tells us that the statue was commissioned by Nero calling upon the expertise of 'Zenodorus', an apparent expert in colossal sculptures, who had made a colossal statue in Gaul for the Averni some years earlier.<sup>943</sup> The one in Rome, Pliny specifies, was made to be a total of 106.5 Roman feet in height.<sup>944</sup> Pliny, an eye-witness of the statue in-construction (*mirabamur in officina*), gives us our best account of the statue's appearance. He states that it was intended to bear the likeness of Nero (*illius principis simulacro*), and that it was at the time of writing dedicated to the sun, following the condemnation of Nero's crimes – referring to Nero's *damnatio memoriae*. Pliny goes on to detail the construction methods involved in the creation of the statue, this being the main purpose of the passage, and praises Zenodorus' skill.

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<sup>942</sup> Pliny *NH.* 34.45-7 (Index 13); Suet. *Nero* 31.1; Suet. *Vesp.* 18.1; Dio 65.15.1; Mart. *Ep.* 1.70.7; Mart. *De Spect.* 2.

<sup>943</sup> Pliny *NH.* 34.45 (Index 13).

<sup>944</sup> The height given varies between sources, and even between manuscripts of the same source. This is the most likely statistic, however, as determined by Albertson – Albertson (2001) p.103-6.

Suetonius mentions the Colossus twice. The first,<sup>945</sup> in the life of Nero, is used to emphasise the size of the vestibule of the *Domus Aurea*, saying that within it ‘might stand’ (*staret*) the colossal statue which bears the likeness of Nero. This gives us the intended location for the statue, which Martial’s epigram, discussed earlier, appears to support (Fig.64).<sup>946</sup> The second is during the life of Vespasian, in which the emperor is praised for rewarding, among others, the *refector* (‘restorer’) of the *Colossus*.<sup>947</sup> Dio, finally, relates that the Colossus was ‘set up’ (ἰδρύθη) at the same time that the Forum of Peace was dedicated, in AD 75.<sup>948</sup> Dio, unlike the other two sources, reports confusion as to the identity of the statue, saying that some report the likeness of Titus, while others report that of Nero. Material evidence can help us fill in the gaps of our knowledge. The only absolutely certain images we have of the Colossus are from coins of the mid third century (Fig.65), after it had been moved closer to the Colosseum. In these, we can see that the right arm held a rudder, with the left arm resting on a column. The same image of *Sol* appears on a Vespasianic amethyst gem (Fig.66), which Bergmann suggests is contemporary evidence for the appearance of the Colossus in the Flavian period – there is little reason to doubt this interpretation.<sup>949</sup>

Reading through the sources, it is easy to assume that the statue was set up during Nero’s lifetime, and did indeed bear his likeness. Despite considerable and continuing debate on the subject within works dedicated to the Colossus, it is still commonly assumed that the statue was erected under Nero, and that it bore his likeness in its original incarnation, especially within reference works and encyclopaedias.<sup>950</sup> While the most fervent and confident argument against this assumption is in Smith’s 2000 review of Bergmann’s monograph of the Colossus, doubt has been expressed since at least the 1960s, with Howell’s 1968 work being the most significant example, and Bergmann is herself of the opinion that the statue was only set up under Vespasian.<sup>951</sup> It is therefore necessary to weigh the evidence carefully to come to a conclusion on these aspects of the Colossus.

The first issue is whether the statue was set up during Nero’s lifetime. Howell was the first to suggest that it was not, on the basis that none of our sources state, explicitly or otherwise, that it was.<sup>952</sup> Suetonius’ use of the subjunctive *staret* (‘there might stand’) is the

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<sup>945</sup> Suet. *Nero* 31.1.

<sup>946</sup> For discussion of Mart. *De Spect.*2 (Index 10), see above, p.119.

<sup>947</sup> Suet. *Vesp.* 18.1.

<sup>948</sup> Dio 65.15.1.

<sup>949</sup> Bergmann, M. (1993) p.11; and followed by Champlin (1998) p.337; Albertson (2001) p.107; Varner (2017) p.96.

<sup>950</sup> See: Benario (1980) p.118; Richardson (1992) p.93-4; Darwall-Smith (1996) p.68; Van Kooten (2007) p.222; Levick (2017) p.137. Even when the debate is mentioned, it is sometimes dismissed out of hand, as if it is a fringe theory – Coleman (2006) p.20; Boatwright (1987) p.110.

<sup>951</sup> Howell (1968) p.292-8; Bergmann (1993) p.9-10; Smith, R.R.R. (2000) p.536-7.

<sup>952</sup> Howell (1968) p.292-4; Lugli (1961) p.4-5; Albertson (2001) p.99.

subject of much attention here, and the consensus is now that it does not imply that the Colossus was standing when the *Domus Aurea* was extant in its entirety – the temporal context of the remark – merely that the vestibule was large enough to contain it.<sup>953</sup> Albertson concurs, and goes into further depth, establishing convincingly that, presuming that the construction of the Colossus began in AD 64, it was impossible to complete construction by the time of Nero's death.<sup>954</sup> In Pliny's passage, in fact, the statue was still in the workshop, lending further credence to the theory that the statue was never set up under Nero, and Dio, finally, plainly states that it was set up (ἰδρύθη) in AD 75. Martial, finally, appears to imply that it was never set up in Nero's vestibule before Vespasian's time, sustaining this theory further, as he uses the present *videt* for the Colossus, and the imperfect *radiabant* for the vestibule.<sup>955</sup> Lega argues against this point of view unconvincingly, saying that Martial only intends to imply that the Colossus no longer exists in Nero's vision for the *Domus Aurea*, while Suetonius' *staret* is ambiguous, and Dio could be explained by the statue being restored and set up again.<sup>956</sup> None of these interpretations, if we accept them, provides affirmation for the erection for the Colossus during Nero's reign; they merely problematise the opposite interpretation. Therefore, until the archaeological record reveals any positive confirmation that it was, it is logical to assume that the Colossus was not completed under Nero. Given the positive evidence for the Colossus being set up later, and the lack of such evidence for it being completed earlier, it is only logical to continue under the understanding that it was not completed under Nero.

The second question, of whether the statue originally featured Nero's likeness, however, is a lot more difficult to resolve. Pliny, Dio, and Suetonius explicitly mention that it was intended to, or did, represent Nero. They all at least imply that it was reworked by Vespasian as well. Smith calls this conclusion into question by pointing out the language used in each case. He argues that the use of *similitudo* in Pliny does not necessarily imply a statue that bears the appearance of Nero literally, but one that looks similar to him, or simply the realism of the image itself.<sup>957</sup> Since this is generally understood to be proof that Pliny witnessed the clay model of the statue bearing a likeness of Nero, he argues that 'without this sentence as usually understood, the Colossus as a portrait of Nero becomes much less certain'.<sup>958</sup> He also argues that the *refector* comment by Suetonius may only refer to the erection of the statue under Vespasian, and not to any reworking effort.<sup>959</sup> In the case of the

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<sup>953</sup> For discussion of the interpretations of this, see Lega (1990) p.351; Bergmann, M. (1993) p.9; Albertson (2001) p.97-8, 103; Champlin (2003) p.130.

<sup>954</sup> Albertson (2001) p.97-102; Flower (2006) p.229; Galinsky (2008) p.10.

<sup>955</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.1, 3 (Index 10).

<sup>956</sup> Lega (1990) p.350-1.

<sup>957</sup> Smith, R.R.R. (2000) p.537; Smith cites Pollitt (1974) p. 430-4; Albertson (2001) p.110.

<sup>958</sup> Smith, R.R.R. (2000) p.537.

<sup>959</sup> Smith, R.R.R. (2000) p.536. See also Albertson (2001) p.110-11.

Pliny passage, I would agree that the use of *similitudo* does not by itself necessarily imply likeness to Nero. However, Pliny does explicitly state that the statue was originally intended to bear his likeness, and that this was changed following his downfall and *damnatio*. In the previous sentence, Pliny uses the word *simulacrum*, a much less ambiguous term.<sup>960</sup> I would argue that if we were ready to accept Pliny's testimony as an eye-witness when he described seeing the clay model as a likeness of Nero, that we should still accept it; Pliny's testimony does not rely on the interpretation of *similitudo*.<sup>961</sup> For Suetonius, the use of *refector* certainly implies that it was a reworking – if we are accepting that the statue was never set up under Nero, then the term would only make sense in the context of additional work being done to change the statue from its original form, and it would not be an appropriate term to use to refer to the original erection of the statue.<sup>962</sup> Even if we acknowledge these as possible interpretations, furthermore, to accept that these were the intended interpretations makes far more assumptions than to accept the 'literal' reading of the sources.<sup>963</sup> Much like Lega, Smith merely unconvincingly problematises the prevailing interpretations of parts of the passages in question, and his arguments are insufficient to counter the body of positive evidence, and complete lack of negative evidence, for the statue's intended depiction of Nero. As many authors have pointed out, furthermore, the commissioning of such a colossal portrait is not unique in Nero's case, as Pliny also reports that Nero commissioned a 120ft tall painting of himself in the gardens of Maia.<sup>964</sup>

Finally, there is the question of whether the statue, as it was intended by Nero, featured the attributes of *Sol*. The sources are silent on this, unfortunately, giving no indication of the appearance of the Colossus prior to Nero's death, apart from that it bore his likeness. We must therefore use our best judgement to guess at its Neronian appearance. Bergmann's proposition, that it featured the attributes of *Sol*, is now generally accepted.<sup>965</sup> She thoroughly analyses Nero's solar imagery during his reign to conclude that such an act would be in Nero's interests, and would be consistent with other elements of his visual programme. Some notable

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<sup>960</sup> *ubi [Zenodorus] destinatum illius principis simulacro colossum fecit* (where [Zenodorus] made the Colossus, intended as a representation of that emperor).

<sup>961</sup> Varner (2017) p.100.

<sup>962</sup> See the definitions of *refector*, *refectus* and *refectio* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* – Glare (1968-82) p.1593.

<sup>963</sup> Lega (1990) p.349-50. Albertson attempts to reconcile the sources by suggesting that the sources are referring to the imperial attributes of *Sol* which featured in the Colossus – Albertson (2001) p.111. However, I see no reason for a compromise like this, when we have no concrete evidence to contradict the testimony of our sources when they all agree.

<sup>964</sup> Pliny *NH*. 35.1; Lega (1990) p.348; Segala & Sciortino (1999) p.11; Albertson (2001) p.109. Varner notes that in the passage which discusses the painting, Pliny uses the word *colosseus* instead of the usual *imago* or *effigies*, likely to deliberately link the painting to the Colossus, which were also approximately the same height.

<sup>965</sup> E.g., Lega (1990) p.349-51; Champlin (1998) p.336.

examples of Neronian solar imagery include Nero's image with a radiate crown on coins, as well as an image on an altar dedicated to *Sol* and *Luna* by Eumolpus, a slave in charge of the furnishings of the Domus Aurea (Fig.67). This image depicts *Sol* with the same attributes that featured on the Colossus.<sup>966</sup> The altar, though it does not mention Nero by name, borrows from his portraiture in the depiction of *Sol*, resulting in, as Varner states, 'a recognizable Neronian instantiation of Apollo-Sol-Helios'.<sup>967</sup> Varner also draws attention to the connection of the Colossus with the ceremonial awnings of the theatre of Pompey, made for Tiridates' AD 66 visit to Rome, which reportedly depicted Nero driving a chariot surrounded by Golden stars – a clear link to Apollo/Helios.<sup>968</sup> This evidence, combined with the fact that the solar elements of the Colossus were significant enough to make conversion from a non-solar Colossus of Nero time consuming and expensive, means that it is more likely than not that the original Colossus was to feature the attributes that we can see on the Flavian version – the rudder, the globe and the radiate crown.

As we know from the sources and as is generally agreed, the Colossus no longer had the appearance of Nero after the end of Vespasian's reign. Therefore, if it had the features of Nero previously, this was due to some conversion effort by Vespasian. The question ought to be raised as to what Vespasian hoped to achieve by reworking the monument - the initial reaction of the contemporary sources to the Colossus, when taken in combination with the other evidence, is certainly perplexing.<sup>969</sup> Was Vespasian trying to fully appropriate the statue, to make it part of his repertoire of public monuments, and thus attempting to suppress the association of the Colossus with Nero? If this was the case, I would argue that this was a failed attempt, as the connections with Nero were clearly well-known enough in the late first / early second century, and they continued to be referenced well into late antiquity.<sup>970</sup> Was he instead utilising the monument to preserve the memory of the negative aspects of Nero's reign into the cultural memory, acting as a point of contrast for the rest of his public building work in the area? In this case, Martial's choice not to draw attention to the statue's Neronian origins when he is praising the Flavians' work in the Colosseum valley remains unexplained. As has been discussed, it is generally accepted that successor regimes often deliberately allowed some of a tyrant's portrait features to remain on reworked portraits, to intensify contrast and enable appropriation. The only way that the question can be satisfactorily resolved, I believe, is

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<sup>966</sup> For discussions of the altar as evidence for Nero's solar imagery, see Bergmann, M. (1993) p.9; Lega (1990) p.349; Champlin (1998) p.337-8; Albertson (2001) p.96; Carey (2006) p.161-3; Varner (2017) p.98-99.

<sup>967</sup> Varner (2017) p.99.

<sup>968</sup> Varner (2017) p.97-8; Dio 63.6.2.

<sup>969</sup> Flower (2006) p.229.

<sup>970</sup> SHA *Hadr.* 19.13; Elsner (2003) p.216; Carey (2006) p.176.

that this is what Vespasian did to the Colossus – the face was changed from that of Nero, but some likeness still remained. This would also explain Dio's report of contemporary confusion as to whom the statue depicted in actuality.<sup>971</sup>

Albertson argues that the method by which the statue was most likely cast is the same as was used in the construction of the Colossus of Rhodes, as told in Philo of Byzantium's *De septem orbis miraculis*.<sup>972</sup> Rather than being modelled, dismembered, cast in separate parts and then riveted together ('lost wax' casting), Philo describes the Colossus of Rhodes being cast *in situ*.<sup>973</sup> In this method, a pillar-like stone core with projecting iron beams hold a framework roughly conforming to the shape of the statue. Foundries were then constructed around this framework to forge the lower part of the statue *in situ*. This process would then be repeated all the way up the statue, with each successively forged piece being fused to the one below it, all being made according to the original model. This method is certainly compatible with the possibility that Vespasian modified the statue's visage. Even presuming that construction had started on the statue by the time that Vespasian came to modify it, the head would have been the last piece cast *in situ*, being the highest part of the statue. Therefore, it would have been a relatively simple process to modify the clay model of the statue before the mould was made for the head.

One more element of the Colossus deserves attention. We have no archaeological evidence, nor any literary references, for the base or the inscription upon it. However, since we have multiple attestations to an inscription for the Colossus under Commodus, and since such an important monument lacking an inscription of any kind would be exceptional, we can assume that there was some kind of inscription present. The base, of course, would have been the first element to have been placed *in situ*, and so would probably have been present by the end of Nero's reign. Therefore, the inscription may have provided a physical representation of Nero's intentions for the statue, even if it was never completed in his lifetime. The inscription would likely have also mentioned Nero's name. If the statue did bear his likeness then the inscription would probably have described it as one of the emperor or named him as the dedicatee. Less likely, but still possible, is that Nero appeared as the dedicator of his own statue. Regardless of the specifics, the appearance of Nero's name on the inscription would

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<sup>971</sup> Howell (1968) p.295; Bergmann, M. (1993) p.9.

<sup>972</sup> Philo Byz. 4.3-4; Albertson (2001) p.99-100. Albertson argues that Zenodorus' skill, as praised by Pliny, would suggest that he would have been aware of traditional casting methods. He also argues that we can trust Philo, despite being a fourth-century AD source, because he seems to be borrowing from a knowledgeable Hellenistic source – Haynes (1957) p.312. This method seems like it was most likely the one used for the *Colossus Neronis*, because of the inherent impracticalities in attempting to assemble a colossal statue from various parts and riveting them together, and the absence of evidence for another alternative.

<sup>973</sup> Philo Byz. 4.3-4.

provide a physical manifestation of the discussion of Nero's intentions for the statue, perhaps acting as proof that the Colossus was originally intended to bear his features. Combined with the possible surviving Neronian features on Vespasian's version of the Colossus, this provides another avenue for the discovery of its original form, beyond rumour and the literary record. The inscription would have then required replacement after Nero's *damnatio memoriae*, and Vespasian's inscription may have recorded the site's prior history, much like the inscription on Trajan's column.<sup>974</sup> Without any direct evidence however, it is difficult to speculate beyond the inscription mentioning *Sol*, and likely Vespasian as the dedicator.

Vespasian's decision to convert the Colossus would have had serious, no doubt intended, consequences for the interpretation of the characters of the two emperors. First, the positive elements which Nero intended, and were then appropriated by Vespasian. The statue is convincingly argued by Champlin to have symbolised the transition between republican Rome and the imperial era.<sup>975</sup> The statue stood on the *Via Sacra*, at the entrance to the venerable *Forum Romanum*, and reaches up to the imperial palaces on the Palatine above, and to the divine heavens. He argues that this is appropriate for Nero, since he was, in short, taking on a more direct approach to 'imperialising' Rome. The use of the rudder in the statue itself was also unusual in images of *Sol*, and I agree with Albertson that it is likely a deliberate allusion to the emperor as steersman of the empire.<sup>976</sup> This is also an appropriate message for Vespasian, though with slightly different connotations. Despite his focus on verism in portraiture, and his humbling common personality, Vespasian was not afraid to officially delineate the 'official' powers of the emperor, for example, by means of the *lex de imperio Vespasiani*.<sup>977</sup> An altered statue, with the features of *Sol* implies a softer transition, under the auspices of the divine, rather than replacing the divine.<sup>978</sup> Nero's intended message would have therefore been re-interpreted as an assertion of his absolute power.

Under Vespasian, the message could even be strengthened by the statue's direction. This is, unfortunately, likely unknowable, but it is most often reconstructed as facing toward the Colosseum nevertheless. This direction would, after the start of the construction of the Colosseum, redirect the transitional implications of the statue. Instead of reaching up from the *Forum Romanum* to the Palatine, it would instead appear to be bridging the gap between the forum and the Colosseum. The Colosseum would come to represent the empire in this arrangement. This would link two public monuments, rather than the public forum and the

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<sup>974</sup> *ILS* 294 = *CIL* VI 960

<sup>975</sup> Champlin (2003) p.129.

<sup>976</sup> Albertson (2001) p.111. I would not go so far as to call it a *Sol Augustus* on this basis, however.

<sup>977</sup> Brunt (1977) p.106-7; Levick (2017) p.96, 192.

<sup>978</sup> Carey (2006) p.163.

private Palatine *Domus* as under Nero's intended scheme. The rudder on the Colossus would also be reminiscent of the goddess more commonly associated with the symbol – *Fortuna*.<sup>979</sup> As Matheson points out, the rudder represents *Fortuna's* ability to steer events.<sup>980</sup> Since Vespasian had acceded following the turbulent civil wars of 69, a reassuring message of being able to steer the empire through troubled times would have been appropriate for Vespasian. The rudder combined with the globe, furthermore, represents both land and sea, and the dominance thereof, by the Roman empire.<sup>981</sup> This would then recall the use of this motif by Augustus following his victory in the civil wars,<sup>982</sup> and thus imply that Vespasian's reign would be as successful as Augustus' was, having won the civil wars of AD 69.

Gagé, in his extensive 1928 article on the subject convincingly argued that part of Nero's message in the Colossus, in conjunction with the *Domus Aurea*, is one of *aeternitas*.<sup>983</sup> The vestibule of the *Domus Aurea* was, prior to the AD 64 fire, home to the temple of the *penates* of Rome, a cult long associated with the eternity of Rome and its inviolability.<sup>984</sup> *Sol* is also a deity that is inherently associated with eternity in the Roman consciousness.<sup>985</sup> The Colossus thus represents a new unending golden age for Rome following the fire, a theme promoted by Nero following AD 64.<sup>986</sup> The appropriation by Vespasian gives this a new layer of meaning, however. As he was detached from any suspicion of having caused the fire, unlike Nero, he would have been able to more legitimately call upon the Colossus as a revival of the temple of the *penates* which had been located there earlier.

Martial's text is also intriguing in what it implies for its importance to the image of the Flavian Colosseum valley.<sup>987</sup> First of all, it is curious to note that he clearly places the Colossus firmly in the category of Flavian work, not even mentioning its Neronian origins. This perhaps implies that the statue's Neronian origins were common knowledge, perhaps to the extent that the Flavian contribution needed to be reasserted. In the epigram, the Colossus is invoked in contrast with the 'wide halls' of Nero's *Domus Aurea*. The contrasting dimensions were a theme that comes throughout the epigram; the inherent religious connotations of reaching upwards to the stars invites a comparison between the Flavians' truly pious ambitions with the earthly and material ones of Nero. By drawing attention to the divine connotations of the

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<sup>979</sup> Varner (2017) p.96.

<sup>980</sup> Matheson (1994) p.18-33

<sup>981</sup> Varner (2017) p.96. The same associations would have been in place for Nero but, as discussed, it is unlikely that it was ever visible in its complete state.

<sup>982</sup> See *RGDA* 3.1. This can also be seen on the *ara pacis*, the '*pax*' panel of which depicts the mother flanked by breezes above both land and sea – Cooley (2009) p.117.

<sup>983</sup> Gagé (1928)

<sup>984</sup> Albertson (2001) p.112. See also Suet. *Nero* 32.4; Tac. *Ann.* 15.41.

<sup>985</sup> Gagé (1934) p.94-7; Gagé (1928) p.116-22 Boatwright (1987) p.120.

<sup>986</sup> Gagé (1928) p.116-22

<sup>987</sup> Mart. *De Spect.* 2.1-4 (Index 10).



statue, Martial also invites comparison between the approaches of Nero and Vespasian with regards to the Colossus itself. This unfavourable comparison would only act to confirm this part of Nero's negative identity.

Finally, the act of reworking the statue is, in itself, one that advertises deliberate contrast between Vespasian and Nero. Wastefulness in selfishness and self-promotion is a major aspect of Nero's negative characterisation following his death.<sup>988</sup> The *Domus Aurea* and the Colossus in its original form, if it were to have been erected in his lifetime, would have been ideal demonstrations of this to the Roman people. On the other hand, the sources are keen to praise Vespasian for his frugal and modest nature, both in his personal life and in governance.<sup>989</sup> By reworking the Colossus slightly, then, instead of destroying it entirely, Vespasian is able to demonstrate his own parsimony and underline Nero's indulgence despite effectively imitating him.<sup>990</sup>

Forty-six years after the Colossus was erected by Vespasian, the memory of the monument was renewed. In order to clear the space for the Temple of Venus and Rome, which was to be built where the vestibule of the *Domus Aurea* then stood, Hadrian deemed it necessary to move the Colossus from the Velia to a position nearer to the Colosseum. The base for the Colossus at this location survives to the modern day. The move supposedly took twenty-four elephants to achieve and the statue was moved upright, according to the account of the *Historia Augusta*.<sup>991</sup> Bearing in mind the considerable difficulty of raising such a monument, and the shortness of the distances involved, I would argue that moving the statue upright would be the easiest method available. The figure of twenty-four elephants, on the other hand, is something that not even the *Historia Augusta* is sure of.<sup>992</sup> Nevertheless, such a large undertaking would invite a ceremonial air, and the use of any elephants at all, which is certainly believable, would seem to confirm that Hadrian intended to make a spectacle of the translocation of the monument.<sup>993</sup> Hadrian would also be incentivised to do this to mark the beginning of the construction of the temple, Hadrian's *magnum opus* in the city, and his personal contribution to the forum complex.

Such a monumental event would surely add weight to Hadrian's appropriation of the monument within contemporary social memory. The associations of the statue with *aeternitas*

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<sup>988</sup> Carey (2006) p.157. E.g. Mart. *De Spect.* 2.1-4 (Index 10); Suet. *Nero* 51, 53-5; Tac. *Ann.* 2.1; Eutropius *Brev.* 7.13.

<sup>989</sup> Edwards (1993) p.170.

<sup>990</sup> Howell (1968) p.295.

<sup>991</sup> SHA *Had.* 19.12. For discussion of this event, see Richardson (1992) p.93-4; Boatwright (1987) p.120; Benario (1980) p.118-9; Perowne (1960) p.109.

<sup>992</sup> *Etiam* with the subjunctive *exhiberet* implies a sense of disbelief on the author's part.

<sup>993</sup> Gage (1928) p.112; Mols (2003) p.459.

and the message of a 'golden age' were as appropriate for Hadrian as they had been for Nero before.<sup>994</sup> Coins of the year 121, the date of the inauguration of the Temple of Venus and Rome, and thus the likely date for the transfer of the Colossus, proclaim a golden age through the personification of *aion*, a deity closely associated with eternity.<sup>995</sup> It is also reported by the *Historia Augusta* that Hadrian intended to commission a second Colossus, of *Luna* (see Fig.64), from Apollodorus.<sup>996</sup> *Luna* has similar associations as *Sol* with regards to *aeternitas*, and this intent, if we can trust the *Historia Augusta* here, demonstrates Hadrian's awareness of these associations, and a desire to preserve them after the move away from its original location. If the memory of the destroyed temple of the *penates*, furthermore, had survived into Hadrian's time, the revival of the space's sacred function would have called to mind the more ancient cult, and its associations with *aeternitas*. The removal of the Colossus also represents another consequence. The vestibule of the *Domus Aurea* was one of the last remaining remnants of Nero's palace. Hadrian's choice to demolish it and replace it with the Temple of Venus and Rome imitates the Flavians, returning the last vestige of the house back to the people.<sup>997</sup> The relocation of the Colossus, therefore, represents the final stage of the statue's appropriation – by removing it from its original Neronian context, Nero's contribution to the statue's origins is condemned via erasure, and the Colossus becomes entirely disassociated from Nero's original vision for it.<sup>998</sup>

The final major change to the Colossus in our period comes under Commodus, who converted the statue to resemble himself in the guise of Hercules. The events surrounding this change also demonstrate some important aspects of the destructive elements of *damnatio*. This conversion is something which, unusually, is attested by all three major sources for his reign – the *Historia Augusta*, Cassius Dio and Herodian. Cassius Dio, firstly, describes the replacement of the head with a likeness of Commodus, and specifies the additions as being the attributes of Hercules - giving the statue a club and a bronze lion at its feet.<sup>999</sup> Cassius Dio also gives the most detail on the inscription, saying that it included a long list of extravagant titles which Dio claims Commodus always used in communications to the senate (notably excluding the ones mentioned specifically by the *Historia Augusta*) and the following statement:

“πρωτόπαλος σεκουτόρων, ἀριστερὸς μόνος νικήσας δωδεκάκις” οἶμαι “χιλίους.”

<sup>994</sup> Mols (2003); above, p.200.

<sup>995</sup> *RIC* II.2 Hadrian, no.136; Birley (1997) p.112; Boatwright (1987) p.122. There were also coins depicting *aeternitas* holding the sun and the moon around this time - *RIC* II Hadrian, nos 81, 114-15.

<sup>996</sup> *SHA Had.* 19.13; Boatwright (1987) p.128.

<sup>997</sup> Boatwright (1987) p.129.

<sup>998</sup> Elsner (2003) p.216.

<sup>999</sup> Dio 73.22.3; Lega (1993) p.296.

‘Champion of secutores; only left-handed fighter to conquer twelve times’, as I (Dio) recall the number ‘one thousand men.’ – Dio 78.22.3.

Dio continues, saying immediately following this description that it was ‘for these reasons’ (διὰ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα), which also includes threats against them and the consuls-elect, that Laetus and Eclectus decided to kill Commodus.<sup>1000</sup> Herodian agrees that the emperor replaced the head with his own, and inscribed the base with the customary titles of an emperor, exchanging the title of Germanicus with ‘conqueror of a thousand gladiators’, similar to Dio.<sup>1001</sup> Herodian thereafter immediately begins his account of the plot to assassinate Commodus, phrasing it like an interruption of the emperor’s plans. The *Historia Augusta*, finally, claims that he made unspecified ‘additions’ (*ornamenta*) to the Colossus, replaced its head with a likeness of himself, and wrote on the pedestal an inscription which included the titles *Gladiatorius* and *Effeminatus*, and that these changes were later removed.<sup>1002</sup>

It seems clear that the specific words mentioned by the *Historia Augusta* are exaggerations, idiosyncratic to the text, and it lacks the specific references to Hercules found in the other sources. However, the other details – the removal of the head, the addition of attributes of some kind, and the inscription celebrating Commodus’ prowess as a gladiator in some way – seem to be consistent throughout our sources. I would argue that, unless we have reason to believe that it was not within Commodus’ established character or known motivations to rework the Colossus in this way, we ought not to dismiss the body of evidence that asserts that he did rework the statue. We also have some fairly convincing candidates for the depiction of the Colossus on coinage (Fig.68), with a statue of Hercules that imitates the prior form of the *Colossus Solis* very closely, in a manner inconsistent with contemporary depictions of Hercules on sarcophagi.<sup>1003</sup> The fact that all of our sources agree is also notable, one of whom, Dio, was an eye-witness.<sup>1004</sup>

Some of the effects of the restoration of such an important statue are clear. As stated by Dio and implied by Herodian, this appropriation of the statue by Commodus was seen as the ‘final straw’ of the tyrant’s maniacal ambitions.<sup>1005</sup> Thus, for many, it would directly represent the oppressive nature of his rule and his egomania, much like the *Equus Domitiani* had done for Domitian. Its erasure therefore would be similarly representative of his ultimate

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<sup>1000</sup> Dio 73.22.4.

<sup>1001</sup> Herodian 1.15.9.

<sup>1002</sup> SHA *Comm.* 17.9-11.

<sup>1003</sup> Bergmann, M. (1993) p.11-13.

<sup>1004</sup> Bergmann, M. (1993) p.11; Gowing (2016) p.117.

<sup>1005</sup> The arrangement in the *Historia Augusta* is slightly different, and the Colossus is only mentioned after his assassination. However, the ‘Champion of Secutores’ title is mentioned among the reasons for his assassination, and may be a direct reference to the Colossus’ inscription – SHA *Comm.* 15.8.

defeat. The divine connotations of the statue are also noteworthy. Not only is it a representation of the sun-god *Sol*, nude so as to emphasize its divinity, but it was also given the attributes of the divine Hercules by Commodus, a god which the tyrant had claimed to be incarnate – as *Hercules Romanus*.<sup>1006</sup> It could be said that this single statue acted as the ‘fulcrum’ for the numerous statues of him as Hercules that were spread throughout the city which are attested to by Dio.<sup>1007</sup> The fact that the statue was the subject of an annual festival, in which the statue was crowned with garlands, adds a further religious importance to the statue – the removal of Commodus’ additions would thus act to purify it, in a similar way to the possible erasure of Domitian from the statue group in the *templum* of Jupiter Custos, as is discussed earlier.<sup>1008</sup> Herodian, in fact, makes reference to the statue’s religious importance; ‘...the Colossus, which is revered by the Romans...’ (κολοσσιαίου, ὃπερ σέβουσι Ῥωμαῖοι).<sup>1009</sup> Finally, the association with Nero would be very strong. While normally appropriating a monument of a condemned tyrant would have been accepted or even preferred, as it had been under Vespasian, Commodus is in this case imitating Nero’s mistake in putting his own likeness on the monument, and this move would be seen as him admitting that he was equally as extravagant as the first-century emperor.<sup>1010</sup> The prior history of the monument and the historical context of the decision to convert it should also be considered. The theme of *aeternitas*, and the statue’s close association with Rome’s eternity, has already been invoked under Nero, Vespasian and Hadrian. According to its placement within historiographical narratives, the transformation of the Colossus was one of the last acts of Commodus’ reign. It would thus have taken place immediately following the devastating AD 192 fire. As has been mentioned in chapter 3, this fire, according to Herodian, was interpreted by some as an omen for the gods’ anger with Commodus’ behaviour.<sup>1011</sup> In this context, an apparent attack on *aeternitas*, or at least disrespect for it, would only seem to confirm these suspicions.

There are issues, however, with looking at the Colossus in the same way as the other statues regarding the spectacle of *damnatio*. The monument was unusually large and it needed to be restored to its original state, rather than destroyed. These constraints mean that unless it took place over the day of Pertinax’s accession (see previous chapter), it would not have been able to be part of the immediate spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*. It would likely have been restored later, taking at least a few months to complete the work. This does not mean that the spectacle of the restoration itself is unimportant or irrelevant, but that it cannot

<sup>1006</sup> Dio 72.15.5; SHA *Comm.* 8.5; *CIL* XIV 3449; Rostovsteff (1923).

<sup>1007</sup> Dio 73.15.6; Speidel (1993) p.113-4.

<sup>1008</sup> *Inscr. It.* XIII.2.42 = Degraffi (1963) p.466; Richardson (1992) p.93 ; above, p.108.

<sup>1009</sup> Herodian 1.15.8.

<sup>1010</sup> Calomino (2016) p.100-101.

<sup>1011</sup> Herodian 1.14.6-7.

be considered to be a central part of the wider spectacle in the same way as the statues of Domitian mentioned above. However, immediate symbolic damage (via mud smearing or simple scratching, as discussed earlier) could have been done to the inscription on the statue – an inscription which was important enough for its contents to be mentioned in all our sources which discuss the changes to the monument. Considering the fact that these modifications, and the implementation of the inscription, were considered by Dio to be a major motivator for the conspiracy that killed Commodus, it is very unlikely that this inscription would have been allowed to remain on display undamaged for long after Pertinax's accession. Not only could this act as an effective condemnation of the statue by proxy, as they destroy its dedication and its label – its 'name' – but it would also be a condemnation of the elements of Commodus which the inscription represented. His gladiatorial exploits were clearly the highlight of these, at least in terms of what was most outrageous about it, and the destruction or obstruction of the inscription would act as a condemnation of this aspect of Commodus' character. This is also a demonstration of the potential for the destruction, mutilation or obfuscation of individual inscriptions during the spectacle to be significantly damaging to the tyrant's reputation. Commodus' modifications to the *Colossus Solis*, one of the most important single monuments in the city, had enraged his opponents, and the spectacle of their destruction both by proxy through the inscription and in reality would have been enormously impactful in disseminating his new negative identity – as an egomaniacal tyrant.

We know for certain that the statue was restored after the death of Commodus to its prior form as *Sol*, as it is depicted as such on later coins. We do not know exactly when this took place; whether it was under Pertinax, Septimius Severus, or during the turbulent civil wars of 193. The act of restoration would, regardless, be a re-assertion of all that the statue had originally stood for, as well as a spectacular condemnation of all the aspects of Commodus' negative identity that could be recognised in the statue's temporary form, cementing these aspects into the cultural memory of the city. The heights of egomania and audacity that the conversion itself implied would be condemned, and the removal of the Commodan aspects of this statue would deny his divinity, collapsing his pretensions of being the *Hercules Romanus*. The reconstruction effort could also have been interpreted as a re-enactment of the recreation of the statue from Nero into *Sol* by Vespasian, thereby associating Commodus further with the infamous tyrant, and the successor with the founder of a mostly successful dynasty. Such an undertaking could also have been seen as a restoration of the *aeternitas* symbolism attached to the monument, something that would further emphasise the visual contrast affected by the restoration of the city following the AD 192 fire. Finally, the proximity to the Colosseum and the text of the inscription connects the statue closely to

Commodus' misbehaviour in the arena. The destruction of these elements emphasises the favourable contrast of the successor's behaviour with that of Commodus.

The continued existence and prominence of the monument would stand as a reminder of Commodus' excesses, his downfall, and the successor's comparative righteousness. Furthermore, the monument would also simultaneously carry the memories of the other emperors who had interacted with it during its long history. Nero's original hubris was heavily associated with the statue after its conversion and erection by Vespasian, who also expropriated his condemned predecessor's intended positive messages. The proximity to the Temple of Venus and Rome would continue to remind people of Hadrian's association with the monument, and would have perhaps allowed the grand spectacle of moving the statue to enter the cultural memory. Within this one monument, a monument which to some extent represents Rome in late antiquity,<sup>1012</sup> are encoded the memories of two separate tyrants, and at least three 'good' emperors intending to contrast themselves with these tyrants and adopt their positive elements. It also embodies the destructive consequences of *damnatio memoriae* directly, as the reworked statue and inscription must have been attacked in some way during the destructive spectacle following Commodus' downfall. The *Colossus Solis*, then, provides an excellent lens through which we can explore the entire long-form process of *damnatio*, from initial transgressions by the tyrant, through immediate condemnation, contrast and appropriation, then interactions with the memory of these actions by successive regimes centuries after the initial act of condemnation.

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<sup>1012</sup> As in the famous quote from the Venerable Bede: *quamdiu stabit Colossus, stabet et Rome; quando cadet, cadet et Roma; quando cadet Roma; cadet et mundus* – Bede, *Opera Paraenetica* 2, *Excerptiones Patrum*, *Collectanea* 543B Migne 94, as quoted in Richardson (1992) p.94; Gagé (1928) p.106-7, 120. See also Kalas (2015) p.51, for its importance to Constantine's restoration programme in Rome.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have argued that placing *damnatio memoriae* within the context of exemplarity can help us to understand its true purpose, and the function it served in Roman society. As part of this, I have examined the immediate and long-term consequences of the destructive acts involved in the *damnatio memoriae* of emperors in Rome. In the previous chapters, I have explored how each direct and indirect consequence of the official condemnation of an emperor's memory and the subsequent attacks on his material legacy play a part in transforming his image in the social and cultural memory of the city of Rome.

In the first section, I explored the events immediately following these *damnationes*. The destructive event was analysed from a broader perspective, looking at how the overall 'spectacle' may have influenced people's perception of the condemned tyrant. A qualitative approach was used in the second chapter of this section, looking at how specific instances of destruction would carry specific messages. The reception of, and participation in, the destructive acts evidently had far-reaching consequences for the posthumous reputation of the fallen emperor. After it was spurred by official endorsement, the impulsive spread throughout the city of violent acts against effigies of the emperor provoked powerful and emotive responses, not only in those present, but also in the texts that refer to the event. The particular methods used to destroy statues, inscriptions and deface coins would have intensified these feelings in many ways, and combined with the Roman reception of violence, the spectacle would have manifested more particular condemnatory messages. The individual targets of these attacks are also crucial in this regard, as the messages the tyrant had intended them to carry could be specifically reversed by their popular destruction, beginning the process of creating the condemned's new identity. The case studies of Domitian and Commodus have shown the promise of this approach to looking at *damnatio memoriae*. The wealth of literary sources for the *damnationes* of both emperors helps us to build a clearer picture of what forms the destruction took, and the archaeological evidence demonstrates the scale of the spectacle well. The individual case studies for Domitian's *damnatio*, meanwhile, exhibit the effect that targeted public destruction could have on an emperor's reputation in Rome. The possible destruction of Domitian's image in the statue group in the temple of Jupiter Custos may have acted as an ironic reversal of the divine rescue that the statue was intended to commemorate, and as a denial of Domitian's claimed divine protection. Meanwhile, contemporary interpretations of the *Equus Domitiani* by Statius betray how the statue's intended interpretation can be twisted in its condemnation. The acts of destruction re-interpret the close link between Domitian and the republican institute of the senate and the

*Forum Romanum* as autocratic tyranny; the statue's role as an embodiment of various aspects of Domitian's rule allowed its destruction to twist these positive associations into negative ones.

In the second section, I considered the non-destructive consequences of the *damnatio memoriae* of tyrants. Though much less considered, these are very important to understanding the impact of the phenomenon as a whole. The deliberate and direct contrast between successor and condemned predecessor directly built upon and intensified the denigration wrought by the immediate destruction following the official condemnation, as the new negative reputation of the tyrant was used by successors to promote themselves. Through the example of the contrast Vespasian drew between his own plan for the city and Nero's *Domus Aurea*, we can see how specific characteristics of Nero's posthumous negative identity were utilised by his successor to promote himself by comparison. Similarly, the material legacy left by Elagabalus' attempt to transform the Roman state religion provided an excellent foil for Severus Alexander's self-representation as a moral avenger of the city. The visual distinction between a city ravaged by fire and one that had been fully restored could, furthermore, allow a successor to highlight the difference between himself and a tyrannical predecessor in a more general sense, while the popularity of recarving images allowed this message of difference to be seen in every corner of the city. Appropriation, furthermore, allowed for a successive wave of denial of the positive characteristics of a condemned emperor, as the material evidence for these characteristics were reattributed to a successor. The propensity for both Septimius Severus and Severus Alexander to choose buildings of historical tyrants to restore, and the ways in which they commemorated this restoration, demonstrates how the surviving architectural legacy of a tyrant may have been liable to be appropriated by a successor, as can be seen in the example of the *Porticus Octaviae*. Severus Alexander may have pursued this further, transforming the original Domitianic scheme of the Forum of Nerva into a monument opposed to tyranny, finalising its appropriation. Finally, the *Colossus Neronis* demonstrates how one monument can be subject to successive phases of changes, each of which embody elements of the above. Its appropriation by Vespasian, its removal by Hadrian, the appropriation by Commodus and the final restoration all demonstrate the ways in which the material legacy of tyrants may have been utilised to promote later emperors, and the potential consequences this had for the memory of the tyrants in Rome.

### Creating the *exemplum*

It has been said that current scholarship on *damnatio memoriae* revolves around a single central debate – whether it was meant to obliterate, and erase the memory of a tyrant, or to



condemn, and make known his condemnation.<sup>1013</sup> Examination of how the *damnatio memoriae* of tyrants in Rome creates a long-lasting negative *exemplum* of tyranny reveals very clearly the best answer to this question – it was both, and both were necessary to achieve the redefinition of identity which *damnatio memoriae* was meant to facilitate. These two ‘phases’ of the transformation of a tyrant’s memory – the removal of the chosen identity and accomplishments of the condemned from the collective memory of the Roman people, and the re-development of him a negative *exemplum* – are crucial to understanding how *damnatio memoriae* interacted with exemplarity in Rome. These phases as parts of *damnatio* have been hinted at in the past by other scholars. For instance, both of these are identified as distinctly separate ‘important aims’ of *damnatio memoriae* by Varner, but it seems to me that the latter cannot exist without the former, without the existence of two competing narratives.<sup>1014</sup> I would argue that in both of these phases, the removal of the condemned’s intended identity and the redevelopment of a new negative identity, there are significant gaps in the existing scholarship. By understanding these two phases to their full extent, we are able to better understand why *damnatio memoriae* was carried out – the conscious and subconscious motivations behind the creation of a negative *exemplum* through destruction.

Much has already been written on the various components of both these phases, of course. The elimination of the condemned’s identity from the collective memory was enormously symbolic in its nature. As stated in the introduction, the memories which survived an individual were considered to be a form of life after death.<sup>1015</sup> As we saw in section 1, the destruction of these monuments created a posthumous death, something intensified by the violent circumstances in which these statues were destroyed. Furthermore, since posthumous commemoration constituted a significant portion of the identity of the Roman elite, as Flower suggests, the cancellation of this commemoration would remove from them their noble identity, symbolically reducing them to a lower status.<sup>1016</sup>

One of the most significant conclusions that Flower draws from her extensive study is the purpose of memory sanctions as being critical to the functioning of Roman *memoria*, and the necessity of this system functioning for the survival of the political system. The sanctions, she says, ‘were designed to preserve and to protect the special memory space of the community and its political system’.<sup>1017</sup> Since memory, through *exempla*, was used as a

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<sup>1013</sup> As stated by Flower, H. as part of an oral contribution during the 2017 conference ‘Memory sanctions and *damnatio memoriae*, c. 200AD - c. 800AD’ at Trinity College, Cambridge.

<sup>1014</sup> Varner (2004) p.2-3. See also Varner on the cancellation of the identity of the condemned, and p.134 on the desecration of images creating negative memories- Varner (2008) p.2-3.

<sup>1015</sup> Varner (2004) p.2; Varner (2008) p.130; above, p.16-17.

<sup>1016</sup> Flower (2006) p.9.

<sup>1017</sup> Flower (2006) p.8, 276-7.

resource for developing Roman morality, if it was corrupted by the memory of a contemptible person, then this threat to the integrity of the system must be removed. In doing this, the power of the people and of the political system is re-asserted, and is presented as stable even in the face of internal threats.<sup>1018</sup> The *damnatio memoriae* of emperors is especially important to be read in this context. The imperial family were guaranteed posthumous commemoration simply by virtue of their birth, rather than their actions.<sup>1019</sup> Therefore, *damnatio memoriae* was an inevitable response to the guarantee that some of these people would be undeserving of commemoration, or even deserving of condemnation. This is even truer for the emperors themselves, who were being deified whenever they were not condemned.<sup>1020</sup> The existence of such extreme praise for all emperors almost by default necessitated the creation of something which would express sufficient condemnation to counteract this, if the integrity of the 'special memory space of the community' was to be maintained.<sup>1021</sup> The removal and replacement of statues offers an ideal solution to this problem, allowing for the condemnation of the immediate past without threatening the political system as a whole.<sup>1022</sup>

The general model of legitimacy by 'acceptance', championed by Flaig, contributes to this inevitability greatly.<sup>1023</sup> The fact that there was no dynastic or legal system of establishing the legitimacy of a ruler, he argues, is evidenced by the fact that usurpation and violent exchange was the only way in which emperors could be removed from their posts.<sup>1024</sup> This was the case in all of our primary case studies here; with Nero, Domitian, Commodus and Elagabalus, all of whom were violently removed. Flaig states that it was necessary for emperors to safeguard against this by maintaining the 'acceptance' of the three 'relevant political sectors'; the senatorial aristocracy, the *plebs urbana*, and the army, and the emperors who fell victim to violent exchange were those who failed to do this.<sup>1025</sup> *Damnatio memoriae*, I would argue, was an inevitable consequence of this method of succession, as any emperor who fell ought to have been 'unacceptable'.<sup>1026</sup> In addition, his successor needed to establish his own legitimacy by securing the 'acceptance' of the same people that had supposedly rejected his predecessor. Violent condemnation of a predecessor's memory, therefore, fulfilled

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<sup>1018</sup> Flower (2006) p.8.

<sup>1019</sup> Above, p.28.

<sup>1020</sup> Above, p.28 n.91.

<sup>1021</sup> A view put forward by Flower (2006) p.xix. For the problems of 'consecration-by-default, see De Jong & Hekster (2008) p.80-84, 94-95. For *damnatio* as the opposite of *consecratio*, see Benoist (2004) p.176. For both of these elements, see Calomino (2016) p.9-10.

<sup>1022</sup> Clauss (1999) p.383-4; De Jong & Hekster (2008) p.94; Kousser (2015) p.44; Calomino (2016) p.10.

<sup>1023</sup> Flaig (2010) p.277-86; Flaig (2015) p.81-90.

<sup>1024</sup> Flaig (2010) p.278-9; Flaig (2015) p.87-8

<sup>1025</sup> Flaig (2010) p.280; Flaig (2015) p.89.

<sup>1026</sup> It could also be argued that almost-inevitable consecration was a direct consequence of any successful emperor being he who had managed to garner acceptance.

both these requirements; simultaneously underlining the legitimacy of the original usurpation and enhancing the successor's own acceptance in the uncertainty of his early reign.

This 'censorship' aspect of the instances of *damnatio memoriae* under discussion here – the removal of the condemned emperor's intended identity – is the critical first step in the recreation of his identity into something wholly negative. It is also a major motivating factor behind the popular, non-centralised destruction that took place in the wake of an individual's memory being condemned. We can see how this occurred in the case studies we have examined. The obliteration is manifested directly as the destruction of anything which could carry a narrative which might compete with the new negative identity. This does not need to be universal to be successful, as a survivor in isolation only calls attention to its own isolation, and within a wider context of complete destruction stands to symbolize the pretensions of the tyrant, or the foolishness of his sycophants. This is most easily seen in the wider en masse spectacle of *damnatio memoriae*, as it encompasses destructive acts throughout the city, attempting to erase the tyrant's presence. However, the destruction of individually famous statues is also important here, as their fame would otherwise enable them to continue promoting the emperor's positive identity even in isolation, as they often acted as keystones for a wider transformative plan for Rome. Commodus' additions to the Colossus, for instance, were obliterated following his downfall, leaving them only to exist in the social memory. In the long-term, furthermore, the practice of appropriation acts to finalise the obliteration of the remaining positive material legacy of tyrants. The final reminders of the tyrant's intended positive identity are absorbed into that of the successor, leaving only the prevailing negative narrative in the cultural memory.

The second phase of this reversal of the process of becoming an *exemplum* was to develop the memory of the condemned into something to be remembered as negative. By now, it seems universally agreed that the purpose of Roman memory sanctions was not to destroy the memory of an individual, but to 'recast' it.<sup>1027</sup> Hedrick, for instance, brushes off the intentions to destroy the memory of an individual as 'pretensions', and suggests that it was always intended simply to dishonour the memory of an individual.<sup>1028</sup> I would argue, however, that the intent to destroy their memory was an integral part of this dishonour – the importance of posthumous commemoration meant that an attempt to destroy entirely their memory represented a very extreme form of condemnation even if the actual consequence

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<sup>1027</sup> Hedrick (2000) p.93-94; Flower (2006) p.240-1; Galinsky (2008) p.20; Varner (2012) p.139.

<sup>1028</sup> Vittinghof (1936) p.32-33; Hedrick (2000) p.93-94; Benoist (2004) p.175; Omissi (2016) p.174.

was a recreation of their memory into something negative.<sup>1029</sup> Though this appears contradictory, it is important to understand the mind-set of those ordering or taking part in the destruction. It seems as if it was recognised by most that *damnatio memoriae* did not result in the condemned being genuinely removed from history. Hostein takes coinage to be evidence of this – that the image and the inscription of the condemned remained present on so many of their coins was an admission of the failure to assert complete control over memory.<sup>1030</sup> Thus, I would argue, it would have been an admission of the impossibility of forgetting an individual entirely.<sup>1031</sup> Nevertheless, to make a concerted effort to bring it about, even if hopeless, is a powerful act of denigration. In this way, the destruction that took place following an official condemnation of memory not only acted to censor their existing identity in the social memory, but also began the process of the creation of their new negative identity. In this way, the act of destruction itself implies an attempt to ‘re-remember’ the condemned tyrant, and to create this new identity.

We have seen how this second phase manifested itself throughout the afterlife of a tyrant’s material legacy in early to middle Imperial Rome. The initial acts of destruction, and their contexts, participants and atmosphere, interact with the intended meanings of the objects that were being destroyed and the existing known negative characteristics of the condemned emperor as spread through text and rumour. I have argued that through the individual and separate scenes of destruction, the initial spectacle of *damnatio memoriae* can begin to achieve the specific condemnation necessary for establishing a new negative *exemplum*. These incidents can also compound powerfully with the wider en masse destruction. This has been demonstrated in the case studies covered in this thesis, with the focus on republicanism and popular violence contrasting with the tyrant’s anti-senatorial tendencies as manifested in their archetypal statues. Commodus’ additions to the Colossus are a good example of this, as they embodied his divine pretensions, arrogance and propensity for gladiatorial combat, and the destruction of this monument would crystallise those as key aspects of his negative character. The negative *exemplum* thus created continued to be added to and developed long after the initial destructive acts. As a successor utilises the surviving material remnants to contrast himself with this established image, he works to highlight specific negative characteristics, which he portrays as directly opposed to him and his good character. Appropriation, meanwhile, provided another opportunity for direct and specifically

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<sup>1029</sup> Varner (2008) p.134 refers to the ‘tensions between oblivion and shame inherent in Roman memory sanctions’. Hostein speaks about *damnatio* setting an example in its immediate aftermath, sending the message that the condemned **would be** forgotten – Hostein (2004) p.232.

<sup>1030</sup> Hostein (2004) p.233.

<sup>1031</sup> Likewise, the presence of the name of Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso on the document which purports to eliminate his memory – Lefebvre (2004) p.216.

targeted denigration. The re-assignment of what is left of the tyrant's legacy acts as a recreation of the initial condemnatory act, reinvigorating this identity and removing the last traces of positive association. Vespasian's transformation of the Colossus demonstrates this, as he not only appropriated the Colossus' intended positive connotations as devised by Nero, but also highlighted the differences in his approach to Nero's regarding the divine and the nature of imperial rule.

The now accepted more complex analysis of *damnatio* as an attempt to publicly condemn the target, rather than forget them, means that the long term effects of the process need to be considered as an extension of this phenomenon. After all, it follows that an attempt to transform the memory of an individual would exhibit itself in the reactions of those not immediately connected to that individual. I hope to have demonstrated that the memory of a Roman emperor condemned by *damnatio memoriae* was interacted with, both during the process of its manipulation into a negative *exemplum*, and after this transformation had been cemented within the cultural memory of the city. The most important consequence of these interactions was that they kept the memory of tyrants very much alive and relevant to contemporaries. If the negative *exempla* that were generated by *damnatio* were not used as such outside of the relatively exclusive literary tradition, it is logical that they would not survive in the cultural memory. The ways in which the memory was further transformed, however, are also very intriguing. Both contrast and appropriation served to intensify many of the negative characterisations that had been implied by the initial destructive event, and act as a continuation of the two phases of the recreation of memory. Contrast reminded the public of these negative qualities, while making these negative aspects seem even more extreme by comparison, thus helping to develop the new identity of the tyrant further. Appropriation, meanwhile, provided another opportunity for direct and specifically targeted denigration, and acted as a final destruction of the intended identity of the tyrant. These later interactions thus both serve to display the use of the negative *exempla* created by *damnatio*, and show how these *exempla* were further manipulated over time. The two purposes of *damnatio*, obliteration and denigration, are thus not in opposition as they might initially seem. They are intertwined with one another, as threats to obliterate act to denigrate. They are also reliant on each other. Without obliteration, it is impossible for denigration to be successful, and without denigration it is impossible to maintain this obliteration.

### Remembering the tyrant

This, then, is how *damnatio memoriae* acted to destroy the old identity of a tyrant and then create a new negative one to replace it. However, while this demonstrates that interaction with material can rework a condemned emperor's memory, it does not demonstrate that this

memory would have been kept by the citizens and thus enter the cultural memory. For this, we ought to turn back to J.Assmann's memory figures and Roller's model of exemplarity, as discussed in the introduction. For a memory figure to continue to exist in the cultural memory it needs to fulfil three components. Firstly, the reference to a specific time and place. We have already seen in the introduction how this is represented in the creation of positive exempla by the creation of monuments that celebrate particular deeds, and how the use of space as a marker of memory was consciously important to ancient Roman writers.<sup>1032</sup> In the negative, these references to time and place would occur in the form of 'anti-monuments'. Throughout, we have seen how the material nature of the destructive event of *damnatio memoriae* engrains the denigration into the fabric of the city. This can take the form either of literal physical reminders of this destruction, these remnants being the subject of much discussion in prior works, or simply the strong association between the physical place where the object used to be and the scenes of destruction. These places act as the reference points for the memory of the tyrant's denigration, and anchors for the memories of his particularly egregious characteristics or deeds.

The second component, significance to the group, is derived from the specific characterisation of the tyrant that is developed during *damnatio* in conjunction with text and social discourse. This is a very significant aspect of this individualised form of cultural repression. *Damnatio memoriae* was more than a simple attempt to 'condemn' the tyrant, though that was certainly a large part of it. It was much more targeted, as it transformed his self-aggrandised arguments for his own deification into boasts of his vices. Though this was partly achieved through text, the material side of the equation was equally important as we can see on surviving remnants. Though this may only be successful within the subconscious of the actors of the demolition, it may have acted as a confirmation of what was being discussed in contemporary texts or rumours. The specific condemnation of these vices comprises the relevance to Roman society. In essence, *damnatio memoriae* is an attempt by contemporaries to set an example for future generations, to delineate the limits of acceptable behaviour by an emperor. This, I believe, is something inherent to sufficiently advanced societies, as we can see by instances of cultural repression that occur later. Even today, cultures decide on what to remember and what to forget based on what is relevant to the values that they believe represent their identity, either passively or actively. Despite this apparently virtuous intent, I would argue that the Roman citizens who took part would not have had true control of the developing narrative. The elites and successor emperors, who largely controlled the systems of monumentalisation and text in the imperial period, would have been able to manipulate this

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<sup>1032</sup> Roller (2004) p.4-5; Assmann (2011) p.22, 44, above, p.23.

narrative to improve their own image. Though their objectives generally aligned with the attempt to condemn the tyrant's actions, they certainly made their mark on the memory figure that was created.

It is this manipulation that fulfilled the last requirement for continued survival of a memory figure. The authorities would have had sufficient motivation to continue this manipulation after the last person to remember the tyrant's initial condemnation had died. Cultural memories can have a status that cannot be challenged, almost revered and their truth sacrosanct. A condemned tyrant in the cultural memory, therefore, can be attacked without the concern of an opposing narrative. These factors combined make later attacks on the condemned, either by appropriation or by contrast, very attractive to successor regimes. These later acts of denigration revive and reinvent the memories of the condemned tyrant into a form that suits the reigning emperor and the ideals that he wishes to promote. Thus, the memory figure of the tyrant is reconstructed in accordance with the needs of the culture as it changes over time, allowing it to survive in the cultural memory.

The scope of this thesis has been to examine the importance of the material aspects of *damnatio memoriae* in early to middle imperial Rome for turning the memory of a condemned tyrant into that of a negative *exemplum* of tyranny. As a result, the significant contribution of other methods of cultural communication, like text and oral history, has only been invoked when it evidences something about the impact of interactions with the material legacy. This is a subject that deserves further study, and a truly comprehensive examination of the posthumous reputations of condemned tyrants in the Roman empire would require this kind of holistic approach. In addition, the later use of these newly created *exempla* ought to be examined. Though we can say that this use existed, as discussed briefly in the introduction, how they were used and how pervasive this usage was remains unstudied.<sup>1033</sup> Any examination of the success of *damnatio* for creating negative *exempla* in the cultural memory would need to consider these factors. Such a study could even go beyond the Roman period, looking at the reception of these Roman tyrants in post-Roman, medieval and modern literature, and judging if such references are representative of the memory figure's survival in the cultural memory, or whether they rely on knowledge of rediscovered historical texts. Without a close parallel examination of these media alongside the material legacy of the tyrant, I cannot hope to make any assumptions about the success of the process in ensuring the negative *exemplum* survived in the Roman cultural memory as it had been intended. Nevertheless, I hope to have demonstrated the potential of the material elements of *damnatio memoriae* for transforming the memory of the tyrant. Furthermore, examination of the ways in which Roman citizens and

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<sup>1033</sup> Above, p.37.

regimes interacted with a tyrant's material legacy demonstrates how this transformation was the true purpose of the phenomenon, and the integral importance played by material culture in the creation and transformation of memory.